THE HERMIT OF SNOWDEN:

OR

MEMOIRS

OF

ALBERT AND LAVINIA.

TAKEN FROM

A FAITHFUL COPY

OF THE

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT,

WHICH WAS

FOUND IN THE HERMITAGE,

By the late Rev. Dr. L—— and Mr. ——,

In the Year 17**.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN the ſummer of 17**, two gentlemen, well known in the Literary world, made an excurſion into *Wales*, not merely to view the country and thoſe monuments of Druidical ſuperſtition which have been ſo frequently examined and deſcribed, but to viſit the villages in the neighbourhood of every place which is ſuppoſed to have been a ſeat of the Druids, and where they thought it probable the peaſants might retain many traditions and

 cuſtoms

cuſtoms which would throw light upon the imperfect account tranſmitted to us of their religious rites and ceremonies, and explain ſome points in the hiſtory of thoſe early ages, which are at preſent exceedingly obſcure. In a journey of this nature it may be ſuppoſed that the hamlets about *Snowden* would not be neglected; our travellers paſſed ſeveral days there; and as they both underſtood the Welſh language, they frequently took one of the moſt intelligent men they could meet with amongſt the inhabitants, as a guide to direct their courſe, and at the ſame time to relate the traditions current in the country, reſpecting any thing remarkable which they might meet with in their walk. As they were rambling one day under the conduct of their guide among the crags and caverns of that ſtupendous mountain,

ſo

ſo renowned for having been the habitation of a ſociety of people who were at once the prieſts, the poets, and the law-givers of their country, the peaſant led them by a narrow winding path to a ſmall terrace of level ground, ſituated at the foot of an immenſe perpendicular cliff, from whence guſhed a very rapid ſtream of water, and bounded by a dreadful precipice overhanging a river into which the ſtream precipitated itſelf with a tremendous noiſe. They were ſtruck with the awful ſublimity of the place, which ſeemed indeed a proper habitation for deſpair: and as they were viewing the prodigious cliff before them, which lifted its head to the clouds, they diſcovered, about nine feet above the terrace, an aperture in the rock which looked as if it were the entrance of a cave, and was acceſſible by means of a large

fragment of ſtone, apparently fallen from the brow of the mountain, whoſe rugged ſuperficies had been faſhioned by dint of labour into a ſort of ſteps to aſcend by. Upon ſeeing the gentlemen fix their eyes attentively on this little Hermitage, for ſuch it proved to be, though now untenanted, the peaſant told them that it was once the abode of *The Hermit of Snowden*, who diſappeared about two years ago, and was never heard of afterwards. He likewiſe informed them that this perſon had been ſo highly venerated for the good he did amongſt the country people, by reconciling them when at enmity with each other, inſtructing and afterwards apprenticing their children, adminiſtering remedies when they were ſick, bringing materials for them to manufacture, and in hard ſeaſons when they could not ſubſiſt by their

labour

labour; providing them with money to purchaſe the neceſſaries of life, that all the neighbourhood believed he was ſomething more than a man; and, that he was miraculouſly ſupplied with the gold and medecines he thus diſtributed amongſt them. The guide added, that the good father had lived thirty years in the hermitage, and was near three ſcore when he was *taken away*; for he ſaid, every one concluded that he was received up into Heaven, like the prophet Elijah; as his body could never be found, though they made diligent ſearch after him as ſoon as he was miſſed; and they were ſure he could not go far from the mountain he was ſo very feeble. The poor fellow aſſured them at the ſame time, that the cell remained exactly in the ſtate it was in when the hermit left it; for that it would be looked upon as

ſacrilege to remove any thing that was there. This account increaſed the deſire of our travellers to viſit a place which had been the abode of ſo extraordinary a perſon. They accordingly aſcended the ſteps already deſcribed, and on entering the aperture, diſcovered a cavity of about 20 feet in length, and nearly as wide at the hither end, but partitioned off, as one may ſay, about the middle by a projecting rock, beyond which there was a ſpace of nearly eight feet ſquare; and in this ſpace the remains of ſome ſtraw and two or three old blankets, which had probably ſerved the Hermit for a bed. The furniture in the outward apartment was as little calculated to contribute to the comfort of its owner as the bed juſt mentioned; it conſiſted of a table finiſhed only by the ſaw, and put together with a few large nails; a ſtool of the ſame rude workmanſhip

ſhip; ſome ſhelves ſtuck here and there where the crags of the rock anſwered the purpoſe of brackets to ſupport them; and three or four planks faſtened together which ſeemed to have been uſed as a door, but without hinges or any thing to ſecure it from blowing down, when the weather was tempeſtuous. The utenſils were as defective in point of conveniency as the furniture. here was only a coarſe earthen pipkin, two or three pans, and a pitcher of the ſame ware; a knife, a hammer, two chiſels, a mattock, and a ſaw; and a ſpike of iron or rather ſteel ground at one end to a triangular point like a graver. Such was the deſolate and unprovided cave which had been inhabited for thirty years by a man, who, according to the peaſant's account of his munificence, muſt have poſſeſſed the means of enjoying

a more comfortable ſituation, if ſome ſecret ſorrow had not preyed upon his mind, which made him devote himſelf to a life of ſolitude and auſterity. The cauſe of his thus renouncing all the pleaſures of ſocial intercourſe, and immuring himſelf in a kind of living tomb, was however in ſome degree explained, by our travellers diſcovering in a receſs of the rock, where art had evidently been employed to ſmooth the rugged work of nature, a highly finiſhed portrait of a very beautiful woman, indiſputably not a Madona, with a lamp ſuſpended on either ſide of it; and the following ſtanzas traced by ſome ſharp inſtrument on the rock beneath.

Where ſleep thy thunders Heaven! or ſtrikes the
fang
Of keen remorſe ſtill gnawing at the heart,
Thro' the rack'd ſoul a deeper deadlier pang
Than thoſe which fiends, and ſulphurous flames
impart?

If more the anguiſh, let me lingering live,
Thus ever gazing to augment deſpair,
On all that nature's partial hand cou'd give,
To form a temple for a mind more fair.

And as I trace in agony of thought
Thoſe angel beauties blaſted by my deed;
That mind with more than angel ſweetneſs fraught,
By me to love's conſuming cares decreed:

Let fancy paint that heaven of bliſs I've loſt,
(Loſt with Lavinia, never more to know)
Till, on the waves of wild diſtraction toſt,
I loſe all memory, ſave of her and woe.

Theſe verſes excited the gentlemens curioſity ſo much that they diſpatched their attendant to the neareſt cottage for a light, in order to ſearch every part of the receſs which ſeemed to have been the hermit's ſanctum ſanctorum; and where they thought it probable there might be ſomething found which would lead to a further diſcovery of the good father's unhappineſs; for though it was evident from the poem that the loſs of ſome favourite lady was the cauſe of his ſorrow, and that he had loſt her by his own fault, yet they anxiouſly deſired to know whether it was by any act of criminality, or merely by a misfortune that he had been deprived of this darling miſtreſs; for they were not willing to conſider the words,

——————Blaſted by my deed,

as a direct proof of guiltineſs.

When

When the peaſant returned with a candle and lanthorn, they carefully explored every part of the receſs; but there were no more verſes, or any thing elſe to gratify their curioſity; and they were juſt going to leave the place when one of the gentlemen obſerved a kind of ſhelf pretty high up in the rock, and ſomething hanging from it which appeared to be pack-tread. He could juſt reach the end of it, and drawing it gently to him, a ſmall bundle of pens, much decayed by the damp, came down along with it. This diſcovery revived the hopes our travellers had entertained upon their firſt ſeeing the ſtanzas under the picture, that they might find ſome manuſcripts of the hermit's writing; and the ſtool was immediately placed under the ſhelf to give them a view of what might remain upon it. On examination,

they found ſeveral quires of blank paper, a bottle of ink, and to their unſpeakable joy four parcels tied up and ſealed very carefully with the contents of each noted upon the outſide; one of them was inſcribed "Letters from Lavinia to Albert"; another "Memoirs of Albert and Lavi-" nia;" another "Elegies to the memory of Lavinia:" beſides theſe ſealed packets there were ſeveral looſe eſſays on moral and philoſophical ſubjects, ſome finiſhed, others only juſt begun; and two or three elegiac ſonnets addreſſed to the ſpirit of Lavinia.

The reader will naturally conclude that our travellers had no intention of returning the treaſure they had ſo anxiouſly ſought after, to periſh in its damp repoſitory. They tied the parcels up in a handkerchief,

not-

notwithſtanding the peaſant's intreaties to have them placed again upon the ſhelf.—The poor fellow even went ſo far as to ſhed tears when he found they were determined to take the manuſcripts away, affirming, that no perſon would ever proſper who ſhould remove ſo much as a ſtick or a ſtone from the cell. But the promiſe of a few guineas ſilenced his ſuperſtitious ſcruples, and reconciled him to an act which he before conſidered as a ſacrilegious violation.

The gentlemen were now ſo impatient to get back to the inn, in order to examine the packets in their poſſeſſion, that they deſired the guide to conduct them by the neareſt way; and after following him a few paces down the path they had aſcended by, he ſtruck off into another, which conducted them to the ſide of the river I have mentioned,

oned, as rolling at the bottom of the precipice. The ſpace between the river and the perpendicular rock, was narrow, marſhy, and covered with tall ruſhes, ſo thick that there was great difficulty in paſſing it; but as our travellers knew from the courſe of the country, as well as their guide's information, that it muſt be the neareſt way to the village they were returning to, they made their way along as well as they could. They had not gone far when a pointer that had travelled with them, made a dead ſet at ſomething on an elevated ſpot of ground, which was covered with buſhes. The peaſant went to ſee what the dog was upon, and had no ſooner reached the place, than he ſcreamed out that it was the body of the poor hermit, for that he knew it by the good father's

ſtaff

ſtaff and the remains of his cloaths, though they were almoſt rotted away. The gentlemen now haſtened to the ſpot; and examining the ſkeleton, for it was little more, they perceived that almoſt all the bones were broken, and lay in ſuch a manner that it was evident he had fallen from the brow of the cliff, and was probably dead before he reached the bottom. The peaſant was a good deal chagrined at a diſcovery which confuted his idle tale of the hermit's being taken up like Elijah into heaven; and which, as he undoubtedly believed it, was probably the cauſe of that ſuperſtitious veneration he had for every thing that was found in the hermitage: but though he was now convinced that the good father died like other men, he ſhewed the higheſt reſpect for the body; and as he ſeemed unwilling to leave it in ſuch a ſituation, the gentlemen

gentlemen propoſed going on to the village by themſelves, and ſending proper perſons from thence to aſſiſt him in removing it ready for interment. The poor fellow very willingly agreed to the propoſal, and the gentlemen got to their inn in about two hours, where, after giving orders for a proper number of men to be immediately ſent to remove the body, they ſat down to a repaſt which, though very homely, was acceptable to men whoſe appetites were ſharpened by a mountainous ramble of ſeveral miles. As ſoon as their meal was ended they began to examine the manuſcripts, which they were obliged to open with great care, as the damps of the cell had injured the paper ſo much that it would ſcarcely bear to be ſeparated; and in ſome parts the writing was almoſt defaced by mildew. The packet which moſt excited their curioſity

curioſity, was that which was inſcribed *Memoirs of Albert and Lavinia*, it was therefore the firſt they opened; and as it is probable, the reader may feel the ſame deſire that the gentlemen did to know the hiſtory of ſo ſingular a perſon as the hermit appears to have been, the ſtory of his misfortunes tranſcribed *verbatim* from his manuſcript, ſhall be ſelected for the preſent volume.

THE

THE

HERMIT, &c.

CHAP. I.

AFTER paſſing twenty years immured within the boſom of a dreary cell, remote from all the comforts of ſociety, and devoted to a life of mortification and ſorrow, the demon of remorſe ſtill haunts me every where, and upbraids me even in my midnight ſlumbers, with a crime for which no penance can atone.

Oh

Oh reader! if theſe Memoirs ſhould ever fall into a human hand, commiſerate the ſufferings of Albert; and let the pages which record his guilt and his misfortunes be a warning to you, never like him to trifle with a feeling heart; but if you love, and meet a kind return, diſmiſs ſuſpicion from your ſoul; for it is a weed ſo quick of growth, and ſo baneful to felicity, that if it once takes root within your boſom, your happineſs is loſt for ever.

I launched forth into the diſſipated ſcenes of faſhionable life with a fortune ſufficient to gratify my moſt ambitious deſires; and nature had been prodigal in her bounty to me; but like a wretch unworthy of her favour, I perverted the talents ſhe had given me from their proper uſe; and inſtead of making them beneficial to ſociety, I turned them

them to the purpoſes of intrigue and ſeduction. The conſequences were ſuch as might be expected from a combination of wealth and genius employed in the purſuit of illicit pleaſures. Few women could defend their hearts againſt the flattery of my eloquence, and the inſinuating ſoftneſs of my addreſs: and with thoſe whoſe minds were tainted by venality, my gold prevailed where my perſuaſions had been unſucceſsful; and I ranged at large amongſt the ſex, a daring and unprincipled voluptuary. But though my paſſions were gratified by theſe libertine attachments, there remained a vacuum in my heart which ſenſual pleaſure could not fill. I languiſhed for more refined enjoyments; for that union of conſenting ſouls which forms the full perfection of felicity, and leaves us not a wiſh,--not a hope unrealized.

At

At length I found a woman intended as it were by nature to beſtow upon me this ſuperlative extreme of happineſs. Lavinia was the moſt charming of her ſex: her mind was faultleſs as her perſon, and from the moment that its rich endowments had unfolded themſelves to my view, my ſoul knew no delight but in her ſociety. A ſimilitude of taſte, diſpoſition, and ſentiment, ſoon united us in the ſtricteſt bonds of affection, and my vanity, as well as my love was gratified by the conqueſt of her heart: for what man could be inſenſible to the glory of being beloved by a woman who knew ſo well how to diſcriminate real worth, and whoſe mind was incapable of yielding its regards to the claim of ſuperficial endowments.

But

But the joy of ſeeing myſelf thus ſingled out as the object of her eſteem was of very ſhort continuance. I had imbibed an ill opinion of women, from my connections with the looſer part of the ſex, and I feared that they were all alike the ſlaves of paſſion or of avarice. Under the deluſion of this illiberal idea, I wronged the generous nature of Lavinia, by ſuſpecting her of mercenary views; and as it was my ambition to be loved for my merit, inſtead of being favoured on account of my fortune, I reſolved to try the diſintereſtedneſs of her affection for me, before I made an offer of my hand. Oh! that the bounty of Heaven had placed her in a ſtate of affluence which might have precluded ſo unjuſt and ſo fatal a ſuſpicion. But ſhe had been deprived of her birth-right by the chicanery of law, a little before the commencement

mencement of our acquaintance; and ſoon after by the ſudden death of a relation, became dependant for ſupport on the capricious favour of a world, which is never very ſolicitous to draw ſuperior merit from obſcurity, or to crown the exertions of unpatronized genius with the reward they are ſo juſtly entitled to. The better to effect the trial I meditated, I contrived to have it hinted to Lavinia, that my circumſtances were far from being ſo affluent as the world ſuppoſed them; that I had from time to time ſuſtained conſiderable loſſes by the villany of thoſe who had the management of my fortune; that I was prodigal in the extreme to women of gallantry, and had waſted ſums upon them which would ſoon exhauſt a princely revenue; and that by continuing to ſupport an expenſive ſtile of living to which my income at firſt was barely

barely adequate, and now, in its diminiſhed ſtate, fell ſhort of ſupplying by hundreds every year, I muſt ſoon be reduced to abſolute bankruptcy, unleſs I married a wife with a very large fortune, to retrieve my deranged affairs.

To confirm Lavinia in the belief of this deluſive tale of my embarraſſments, I took occaſion at our next interview, to complain of the enormous expence attending faſhionable pleaſures; lament the hard neceſſity of either ſupporting that ſtyle of life which a man had at firſt embarked in, or giving up his connections, his intereſt, and his expectancies, and ſinking at once into obſcurity and contempt. I then made a tranſition, as if by accident, to the ſubject of uſury; curſt the rapacious race of Jews, with the energetic warmth of one

who had been a ſufferer by their extortions; and then, as if I recollected myſelf, abruptly dropt the converſation, aſſumed an air of tender melancholy, and took leave of Lavinia in a manner calculated to make her ſuppoſe that affection and prudence were at war within my ſoul. I was previouſly engaged to paſs the evening of that day with the family whom ſhe then was viſiting, and at whoſe houſe I had been introduced to her acquaintance. I went there rather earlier than uſual, and found Lavinia alone in the drawing room; when I entered, ſhe was penſive, melancholy, and reſerved; and it was evident that what had paſſed in the morning made her think a change of behaviour neceſſary: for till then the ſmile of ſatisfaction and the glow of pleaſure always brightened in her countenance at my approach. It was near a

quarter

quarter of an hour before the family came to us; and though Lavinia often endeavoured to break the aukwardneſs of her ſituation, by introducing ſome indifferent ſubject, ſhe was too much embarraſſed to ſucceed, and I purpoſely denied her my aſſiſtance; for I felt a joy in her perplexity, which I conſidered as an omen in my favour, and ſought rather to increaſe than remove it. Beſides I was happy in ſuch an opportunity of probing the receſſes of her heart, which often betrayed its emotions by an involuntary ſigh, or a tear ſtarting from her eyes, whenever they encountered the tender and melancholy glances of mine; for I aſſumed an air of ſorrow, little conſonant to my feelings, in order to convince myſelf whether intereſt or affection had produced thoſe appearances of regard which I beheld with ſo much pleaſure;

but with a pleaſure ſo embittered by anxiety and ſuſpicion, that it was ſometimes almoſt turned to anguiſh. Her preſent behaviour, however, gave me ſtrong aſſurance that I poſſeſſed her heart,—for pity is the ſiſter of love;—and it was impoſſible for me to doubt that ſhe commiſerated the diſtreſs ſhe thought me labouring under.

Oh! that I had at that moment given way to the dictates of affection.—That I had thrown my arms around the ſorrowing Lavinia—lulled all her cares to reſt upon my boſom, and acknowledging the injury which too miſtruſtful love had done her generous nature, implored the bleſſing of her hand in proof of her forgiveneſs.—But ſhame reſtrained me from confeſſing the abject part I had acted: I felt myſelf degraded

degraded by my baſeneſs, and I could not bear to acknowledge how unworthy I was of her eſteem. During this conflict between pride and affection, our tête a tête was interrupted by the enterance of the family; and the converſation turned on different ſubjects: but Lavinia could not recover her ſpirits ſufficiently to join in it, and was obliged to plead a head-ach in excuſe for a dejection which it was not in her power to conceal: I ſaw her diſtreſs—I felt for it, and accuſing myſelf as the occaſion of her ſufferings, was often on the point of intreating her to indulge me with a few minutes audience in another room, that I might throw myſelf at her feet, and confeſs the duplicity I had been guilty of: but pride, that tyrant of the human breaſt oppoſed the generous reſolution; and when it became ſo late that I could

not protract my viſit any longer, I took leave of Lavinia, without coming to any explanation. She was to ſet out the next day on a journey to a very diſtant part of the kingdom; and as ſhe was likely to continue there ſome months, I requeſted permiſſion to write to her; ſhe granted my requeſt with an air of perturbation which ſhewed how much her heart was intereſted in the event; though at the ſame time there was ſomething in her countenance that ſeemed to ſay, ſhe condemned herſelf for engaging in a correſpondence of ſo dangerous a nature; for at that moment ſhe conſidered me as a man with whom it was impoſſible ſhe ſhould ever be united upon honourable terms, and her virtue took alarm at the conſequences which might reſult from the continuance of our intimacy under ſuch circumſtances.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

WHEN I returned home, and came to reflect ſeriouſly upon the events of the evening, I reproached myſelf moſt ſeverely for the artifice I had practiſed, and would have given half my fortune to recall what had paſſed in the courſe of the day. How mean an opinion, ſaid I, muſt Lavinia entertain of my integrity, when the falſehoods I have given a ſanction to by my hints, and my behaviour this morning, are made known to her? Will ſhe not deſpiſe, nay perhaps renounce for ever, the man who could deſcend to ſuch hypocriſy? or will ſhe yield her faith

to my aſſertion that it was exceſs of love, and the deſire of aſſuring myſelf that I received a full and uninfluenced return, which determined me to make ſuch a trial of her affection?

But while I was thus condemning myſelf for my diſſimulation, and foreboding the fatal conſequences it might produce, the dæmon of ſuſpicion, which was now become an inmate of my boſom, ſuggeſted the idea of Lavinia's having diſcovered, by her penetrating ſagacity, that the ſtory of my embarraſſed circumſtances was invented merely to try her diſintereſtedneſs; and that ſhe was now employing art againſt art, in order to ſecure the conqueſt ſhe had gained over my affections. This ungenerous and cruel ſuppoſition had no ſooner fixt itſelf in my mind, than

I reſolved

I reſolved to prove Lavinia's ſentiments ſtill further, before I made an unequivocal declaration of my own; for though I had given her many oblique aſſurances of a tender and honourable attachment, I always avoided coming directly to the point; and took care to convey my profeſſions of regard in ſuch ambiguous language, as to leave room for a very different interpretation from that which her unſuſpecting generoſity of ſoul induced her to annex to them; and I now determined to adopt the ſame duplicity of ſtile in the letters I ſhould write to Lavinia, inſtead of acknowledging my fault, as I had before reſolved to do, and making her at once an offer of my hand, as an atonement for the injuſtice I had done her.

Oh! angel excellence! what years of miſery had I eſcaped by purſuing my firſt determination? But I was unworthy of the happineſs I ſhould have then enjoyed in your ſociety; and ought to bear with reſignation the puniſhment which Heaven inflicts to chaſten and reform me.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

LAVINIA's return to London was haſtened by an unexpected misfortune. I have already ſaid that the unfavourable deciſion of a lawſuit had deprived her of an affluent independence about a year before I became acquainted with her. From that time ſhe had been ſupported by the bounty of a near relation, who poſſeſſed a large eſtate, but ſo tied up by ſettlements, that he could make no proviſion for Lavinia, after his deceaſe. Soon after ſhe went into the country, the diſtreſſing news was brought her of this Gentleman's being killed by a fall from his horſe, and as ſhe loved him with the affection of a ſiſ-

ter, the ſhock of loſing him ſo ſuddenly, and in ſuch a manner, made ſo deep an impreſſion on her mind, that it was thought neceſſary by the lady ſhe was viſiting, to bring her back to the Metropolis, in order to diſſipate her thoughts, and prevent her giving away to a kind of moping melancholy which had, perhaps, another cauſe beſide the loſs of her relation. I paid my reſpects to her as ſoon as ſhe arrived in town; and found an alteration in her appearance which extremely ſhocked me: ſhe was pale, emaciated and ſpiritleſs, and when I ſpoke to her had hardly the courage to reply. In ſhort there never was a more intereſting object preſented to the eye of ſenſibility than Lavinia was at that moment. She touched me to the very ſoul; and if there had not been company preſent I ſhould at once have thrown myſelf at her feet, and offered

offered her the protection of a huſband's arms to compenſate the loſs of her benefactor; but my evil genius thwarted the generous intention, by detaining the ladies in the room; and as I was not at all acquainted with them, I could not intrude by too long a viſit; ſo I once more took leave of Lavinia without coming to any explanation. Whether it was the tender concern which ſhe perceived me feel for her ſituation, or that the change of air and ſcene produced the wiſhed for effect upon her ſpirits, I leave the reader to determine; but from that moment there was a viſible alteration in Lavinia's health; and as ſhe recovered from that declining ſtate which had alarmed my apprehenſion for her life, and made me tremble at the idea of loſing her, my ſuſpicions, all returned with double force; and I felt an increaſed

creaſed deſire of ſatisfying them by a further trial of her heart, which might, I thought, be made much more effectually in her preſent deſtitute ſituation than it could have been at any former period. For the greater part of the ſex are not endowed with fortitude to ſuſtain the rigours of adverſity; nor have they, in general, that magnanimity of mind which can bear the loſs of fortune and its conſequent humiliations, without catching at the firſt opportunity which preſents itſelf of removing them; and there is not perhaps one woman in a hundred, who when ſighing under the unexpected loſs of affluence, and the terrors of approaching poverty, would be able to reſiſt the temptation of ſacrificing affection to intereſt, by renouncing the man ſhe loved, and giving her hand to him whoſe fortune would reinſtate her in

in

in her former ſphere, and enable her to ſhine again in the circle of her gay acquaintance. This opinion, which experience had given me reaſon to entertain of the ſex, perſuaded me to poſtpone an eclairciſſement with Lavinia until her conduct at this critical juncture ſhould convince me whether ſhe poſſeſſed that ſuperiority of mind, and that ſteadineſs of attachment which I wiſhed to ſee united in the woman I made my wife; for I knew that ſhe could not fail of being addreſſed by many ſuitors, whoſe wealth would throw a dazzling lure before the eyes of female vanity; and I anticipated with rapture the joy I ſhould experience if her regard for me ſhould ſtand that fiery teſt. My viſits therefore to Lavinia, (who remained at the houſe of the Lady that had accompanied her to London) were continued on the ſame

ſame ambiguous footing as before ſhe went out of town: and while my eyes ſtill addreſſed her in the language of love, and my attentions made every one around her conclude that I was inſtigated by ſofter ſentiments than thoſe of ſimple friendſhip, they were all equally at a loſs to account for my behaviour, or to diſcover the cauſe of my not avowing my paſſion to a woman for whom I ſhewed ſo ſtrong an attachment: for Lavinia carefully concealed the tale of my pretended embarraſſment in point of circumſtances, and the family ſuppoſed me (as I really was then) a man of ſplendid fortune. At laſt Lavinia's friend, who was a woman of penetrating diſcernment, and well acquainted with the artifices of men of gallantry, began to entertain ſuſpicions of my having ſome diſhonourable intention; and gave orders, unknown to Lavinia, that

that I ſhould not be admitted, except when there was other company, or in conſequence of a formal invitation. By this means I ſaw Lavinia but ſeldom, and never alone, which excited a degree of jealouſy in my ſoul that drove me almoſt to madneſs; for I then believed Lavinia conſenting to the frequent refuſals I received at the door, and concluded that I had a rival in her affections, for whoſe ſake ſhe wiſhed to keep me off, and would in a little time decline my viſits intirely. This opinion was confirmed by a rumour (circulated as I have ſince diſcovered by the lady with whom Lavinia reſided, in order to learn the nature of my regard for her Friend) of her being on the point of marriage with a gentleman of very large fortune, who had ſeen her in the country, and

and followed her to town; and that as ſoon as the ceremony was performed, they were to ſet out on a tour through Italy. Until the moment that I received this information I did not know how intirely my happineſs depended on a union with the object of my love. The idea of ſeeing Lavinia the wife of any other man drove me almoſt to madneſs. I fell into a violent fever, and during its temporary inſanity, made many attempts to put an end to my exiſtence. As ſoon as the diſorder abated, I was ordered by the phyſicians to try my native air of Devonſhire for the recovery of my health, and if that did not ſucceed, to embark for Liſbon, and paſs the winter there, as there was an appearance of my lungs being affected by the reliques of the fever, and they dreaded the conſequences of my remaining in our uncertain climate. I followed their

advice

advice without heſitation, from the fear I was under that if I continued in London, I ſhould be guilty of ſome indecent extravagance when Lavinia's marriage ſhould be announced in the public prints; and though I deteſted her ſuppoſed inconſtancy, I had ſtill too great a regard for her happineſs, even when united to my rival, not to wiſh to avoid giving her uneaſineſs by any act which the fury of a diſappointed paſſion might hurry me into, when I found that ſhe was for ever ſeparated from me. I therefore entruſted the ſecret of my love for her to a friend, who promiſed to inform me of every thing relative to her marriage as ſoon as it tranſpired, and I ſet out for Devonſhire without even bidding her farewell.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

I TOOK up my abode while in Devonſhire, at a houſe on my eſtate, which I had always intended to make my ſummer reſidence, when I exchanged the diſſipation of a ſingle life for the joys of matrimonial felicity. And as my imagination had often out-ran the preſent moment, to contemplate the pleaſures I ſhould ſhare with Lavinia in this delightful retirement, every room that I went into recalled her idea ſo forcibly to my mind, that I at times believed ſhe was my wife; and that I ſaw her preſiding at my table, accompanying me in my walks, or employed

employed in the performance of thoſe maternal duties which make the wife appear more charming than the bride, and cement indiſſolubly the bands of connubial affection. A ſcene which was thus awaking every moment a ſenſe of my misfortune, could not be very favourable to my recovery, and as I found that if I continued any longer there, a worſe diſeaſe than the conſumption, which my phyſicians ſo much apprehended, would take poſſeſſion of my mind; I reſolved to purſue my journey to the Continent, in order to ſhake off, if poſſible, a melancholy which was growing upon me every hour. While I was preparing for my departure, a letter arrived from the friend who had promiſed to give me all the information he could collect reſpecting Lavinia; and ſo ſtrongly was I poſſeſſed with a belief that it would communi-

communicate the tidings of her marriage, that it was ſome minutes before I had the courage to open it. But what aſtoniſhment and joy were excited in my boſom, when it aſſured me, from the beſt authority, that the report of Lavina's approaching nuptials had been circulated without any foundation; that it was an artifice deviſed by her friend, to bring me to an ecclairciſſement, and that Lavinia was ſo highly offended at her officious kindneſs, as to ſeparate herſelf from her family, and take up her abode with thoſe friends at whoſe houſe I had been introduced to her acquaintance. It is impoſſible for any one who has not loved like me, to judge of the tranſports I felt at this information. It renovated my health, my ſpirits, and my hopes, and ſeemed to lift me from the abyſs of deſpair, to the

ſummit

ſummit of human felicity. In ſhort, I now conſidered my union with Lavinia as an event which nothing could retard; and ordering my carriage to the door immediately, I ſet out for London with all the impatience of a man, who has recovered, by ſome unexpected accident, a bleſſing he thought loſt for ever.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

ON my arrival in London, I drove directly to the houſe where my friend informed me Lavinia had removed to; but ſhe was gone out on a viſit, and to the very Lady who had circulated the report of her approaching marriage. This information at once revived the ſuſpicions which had been lulled to repoſe, by the aſſurance my friend had given me of her reſenting the artifice in ſuch a manner, as to renounce the acquaintance intirely; and even take an abrupt leave of a perſon to whom ſhe owed conſiderable obligations.

Though

Though I was on a footing of intimacy with the maſter and miſtreſs of the houſe, I could not be prevailed on to wait Lavinia's return, who was expected back to ſupper, but went home, under pretence that after ſo long a journey, I had occaſion for reſt, and promiſed to call upon them the next morning. I went to bed as ſoon as I got to my own houſe; but though my mind, as well as my body, was exceedingly exhauſted by fatigue, I was too much agitated to think of ſleeping. Lavinia's removal from the protection of a Lady who had ſhewn the tendereſt ſolicitude for her welfare, was now conſidered by my ſuſpicious love as an artifice to make me believe her ignorant of the ſcheme which had been laid to draw me into an explanation with her;

and I no longer doubted of her being privy to it, if not the firſt ſuggeſtor.

Yes,—ſaid I to myſelf—the woman who affected to be incapable of diſſembling, and to make ingenuouſneſs the rule of her conduct, has now betrayed the fallacy of her profeſſions; ſhe has deſcended to propagate an untruth, for the purpoſe of drawing me into marriage: and now that ſhe finds the project unſucceſsful, ſhe is endeavouring to make me think her diſpleaſed with the attempt, by feigning reſentment againſt the friend with whom ſhe privately keeps up an amicable correſpondence. No, exclaimed I—it is evident Lavinia is not the woman I ſuppoſed her. The ſpecious appearance which ſhe wore of candour and diſintereſtedneſs was aſſumed to deceive me: ſhe had convinced

ed herſelf that there was no truth in the ſtory whiſpered to her, of my being ſtraitened in point of fortune, and has been trying to conteract art with art, in hopes of enjoying that affluence which is the object of her ſeeming attachment. After paſſing the night in theſe reflections, I dreſt and went to pay the viſit I had promiſed to the family ſhe now reſided with, and found her ſitting alone to receive me. Our meeting was formal and reſtrained. and after talking a little while on general topics, I told her I had done myſelf the honour of calling to wiſh her health, before I ſet out for the Continent, in hopes of recovering my own, which had not received that benefit from my native air that the phyſicians had expected it to produce; and that there were other reaſons beſides the reſtoring of my conſtitution,

which made a change of climate neceſſary. I uttered the laſt ſentence in a ſoftened tone of voice, and with an air of melancholy, to try what effect it would have upon her; and I ſaw an inſtantaneous change take place in her countenance, which almoſt ſhook my reſolution, the tears ſtood trembling in her eyes, ſhe raiſed them towards heaven, claſped her hands together, and ſighed as if her heart were burſting; then endeavouring to recover herſelf, ſhe ſaid ſhe wiſhed me a perfect reſtoration of health, and every other felicity that could make life deſirable. For her own part, ſhe had nothing more to hope for on this ſide the grave; her ſpirits were too much depreſſed to allow of the exertions her friends adviſed her to: they recommended her attempting to write for the ſtage, but ſhe knew the taſk would be

too

too arduous for her; ſhe had neither a genius or knowledge of the world to embark in ſuch an undertaking with any proſpect of ſucceſs, and ſhe believed ſhe ſhould entirely give up the idea.

There was ſomething ſo ingenuous in Lavinia's manner of explaining herſelf on this ſubject, that it almoſt made me aſhamed of ſuſpecting her ſincerity; but her viſit the evening before to that perſon whoſe acquaintance ſhe pretended to have renounced, made me ſtill think it probable ſhe was now practiſing upon my feelings; and as ſhe expected to ſee me that morning, like a ſkilful actreſs, ſhe had ſtudied the part ſhe was to perform, and even ſchooled her features with a deſign to inſnare me; for when once ſuſpicion has found a harbour in the breaſt, it

ſpreads a cloud over our judgment, and darkens even the luſtre of integrity itſelf, by ſhewing it through the murky veil.—Yet, in ſpite of all this miſtruſt, I found my heart ſtill abſolutely devoted to Lavinia, who had excited my compaſſion, and inflamed my love, by the plaintive ſoftneſs of her voice, and that look of patient reſignation which accompanied her words, when ſhe avowed her having nothing more to hope for on this ſide the grave; but the demon that tyrannized over my ſoul, and ſubdued every dictate of affection, prevented me once more from confeſſing my intentions to Lavinia; and reſuming that air of indifference, which I had put on when I entered the room and found her alone to receive me, I talked to her about the ſcheme ſhe had been adviſed to purſue of writing for the Theatre;

Theatre; and reproving the diffidence which ſhe entertained of her abilities, I endeavoured to perſuade her (of what was really my opinion) that her talents were equal to any taſk ſhe could undertake; and aſſured her at the ſame time, that if I could be in any reſpect inſtrumental to her ſucceſs, ſhe might command my ſervices with freedom. She thanked me for my offer, and with a placid ſmile, which pleaded more perſuaſively than language could have done, ſhe waved her head and ſaid, ſhe had but one favour to aſk of me, which was, that while I continued abroad I would ſometimes think of the unfortunate Lavinia. I muſt have been loſt to every feeling of humanity, if this requeſt had not penetrated my ſoul. I took her hand and kiſſing it with tenderneſs, intreated her to believe that wherever I ſhould go, I

muſt bear along with me the dear remembrance of her friendſhip; and as an aſſurance of mine, I begged leave to be honoured with her correſpondence. She promiſed me the favour I requeſted, and recovering both her ſpirits and fortitude at this mark of my regard for her, began to converſe about her dramatic undertaking, which ſhe ſaid my flattery had now determined her to purſue. She then told me that the idea had been ſuggeſted by that Lady at whoſe houſe I had ſeen her before I went into the country, and that that Lady had promiſed to introduce her to Mr. ——— the proprietor of ——— theatre; but as a ſhyneſs had taken place between her friend and her, which had broken off all intercourſe, ſhe concluded ſhe ſhould hear no more of the promiſed introduction to Mr. ———, and in conſequence gave over all

all thoughts of the tragedy ſhe was projecting. But that two days ſince, ſhe received a letter from her friend, requeſting ſhe would meet Mr. ——— at her houſe on the evening I came to London, and apologizing in ſuch affectionate terms for the ſtep which had occaſioned their difference, that ſhe could not avoid forgiving the meaſure, though ſhe muſt always lament its being uſed.

She then converſed with me about my going to the Continent; and expreſſing an apprehenſion from my debilitated appearance, that a change of air was abſolutely neceſſary, ſhe intreated me not to delay my voyage, leſt my health ſhould ſuffer by my neglect of it, and concluded by aſſuring me that ſhe would be punctual in anſwering my letters. Lavinia's whole

deportment during this interview was ſuch, that I went away more confident of her diſintereſted regard then I had ever been at any period ſince that fiend ſuſpicion, firſt whiſpered a diſtruſt of her heart; and if the fear of appearing whimſical had not induced me to go abroad, I might with great ſafety have wintered in London: for as my diſorder proceeded from the mind, I ſhould have recovered my health when once I had regained my tranquility, and both were now in a fair way of re-eſtabliſhment by the confidence I began to place in Lavinia's affection for me. But I had ordered every preparation to be made for going to the Continent, and I could not bear the idea of being laughed at for capriciouſneſs. So that after three days ſtay in London I ſet out for Dover, not meaning, however, to proceed to the ſouth of

France

France as I before deſigned, but to ſpend a month or two at Bruſſells, and then return to England, where I hoped to be united for ever to my beloved Lavinia.

CHAP. VI.

THE journey and the change of air conſpiring with the alteration which my laſt viſit to Lavinia had produced in my mind, had ſo favourable an effect upon my health and ſpirits, that I recovered both very rapidly; and on my arrival at Bruſſells, I felt very little remains of that languor which I was ſinking under not a fortnight before. I wrote to Lavinia, whom I now conſidered almoſt as my wife, the moment I got to the hotel, and was ſealing my letter, when a gentleman whom I had known in London, though rather ſlightly, came in to my apartment in a tranſport of joy at my arrival, which he

he had been informed of by enquiring of my ſervants whoſe carriage it was that ſtood at the door, when he came home to the hotel to dreſs for an evening party at the houſe of the Count de Lauſane; for he was one of thoſe airy coxcombs, who with a tolerable ſhare of wit, a flow of frothy eloquence, and a perfect knowledge of the faſhionable world, inſinuate themſelves into the beſt company, and contrive to make a genteel appearance with very little fortune to ſupport it. He had been about two months at Bruſſells; and though an abſolute ſtranger at his arrival, was now acquainted with all the families of diſtinction in the town, had the entrè of their houſes and was received by them as a man of affluent circumſtances, though in reality the little fortune he inherited as a younger ſon of no very wealthy Baronet,

had

had been ſunk in a twelvemonth after the deceaſe of his father, and he was now confined to an allowance of one hundred a year, which was made him by a jointered aunt. The truth was, he gambled rather ſucceſsfully, and after a run of good luck, he generally equipt himſelf as a man of quality, and ſet out on a fortune hunting project, to ſome place of public rendezvous, where rich heireſſes are to be met with, and ſometimes fooled into matrimony by an elegant figure, a genteel addreſs, and a rhapſody of flattering compliments. I ſoon diſcovered that it was in purſuit of a Lady of this deſcription, my gentleman had come to Bruſſels, and that he conſidered my arrival as a happy event for him, on a double account; firſt, as I was on a footing of intimate friendſhip with the Britiſh Reſident there, he thought my

my acquaintance would give him eclat, and prove favourable to his matrimonial deſigns upon a girl of ſome family, with a preſent fortune of 30,000 florins, and the certain expectancy of a larger eſtate, whom he had followed thither from Spa. But the more material reaſon of the joy he ſhewed at ſeeing me, was that his finances were nearly exhauſted, and he made no doubt of recruiting them ſome way or other at my expence. He ran into the moſt extravagant encomiums on the gaiety of Bruſſells; the wit, politeneſs and beauty of the ladies there, whom he repreſented as perfect angels, and concluded by requeſting I would give him leave to introduce me that evening, to Madame la Counteſs de Lauſane, who was conſidered as the *belle éſprit* of Bruſſells, and whoſe houſe was the general rendezvous of men

of

of taſte and faſhion. He added, by way of inducing me to accompany him, that her huſband the Count, though old enough to be her father, was not addicted to jealouſy, but allowed her to have as many gallants as ſhe pleaſed, beſides the eſtabliſhed Ciciſbeo, who was here a neceſſary appendage to every woman of quality, and looked upon as a mere domeſtic animal, of whom even a lover was not afraid. There was ſomething in his manner of deſcribing this family that excited my curioſity to ſee them; and as I had no ſettled ſcheme for the evening, I promiſed to attend Mr. H—— to the Counteſs de Lauſane's at the uſual hour of viſiting. He did not fail to call for me at the time appointed, and we went together to the Count's, where I ſoon found how little his idea of beauty correſponded with mine. The

Counteſs,

Counteſs, whom he had extolled as a terreſtrial divinity, was paſt the bloom of life, but dreſt in a juvenile ſtile, and ſo extravagantly painted, that it was impoſſible to conjecture what her natural complexion was, except from the darkneſs of her eyes and hair, which were both fine, but the former had infinitely too much boldneſs: ſhe was however well made, and rather majeſtic, with a tendency to the *en bon point*, which is extremely advantageous to a woman on the wrong ſide of five and twenty. Her manners correſponded exactly with her form; they were bold, familiar, and expreſſive of a libertine inclination; and her wit owed its brilliancy to *double entendre*. Such a woman could not fail of calling to my mind, the gentle elegance and delicacy of my Lavinia; who with an extent of genius, and a magnanimity of ſoul, which

which very few men can boaſt of, had all the winning ſoftneſs of her ſex; and was ſo far from being vain of her ſuperiority that ſhe ſeemed unconſcious of it.

Mr. H—— preſented me to the Counteſs as his very particular friend, (though we had ſcarcely ſeen each other ſince we quitted the Univerſity,) and added in a loud whiſper, that I was a member of the Britiſh Senate, with a very conſiderable fortune, and the intimate acquaintance of Mr. ——, the Britiſh miniſter at Bruſſells, whom I afterwards found to be an admirer of her ladyſhip's. This pompous introduction gained me many diſtinguiſhing marks of attention from the Counteſs; ſhe placed me on the Sofa by her, addreſſed her converſation to me, and when the card-tables were brought, inſiſted on me being

being of her party. I would have excuſed myſelf from play, if there had been a poſſibility of doing ſo, without a breach of good manners, but the lady was abſolute in commanding me to take a ſeat by her, and before we roſe from the table, ſhe put a hundred and fifty guineas of my money in her pocket. This was a trifle not worthy of my regret, but I had ſoon reaſon to curſe my initiation at the gaming table; for I was not acquainted with the ſcience, and though I played whiſt very well as a gentleman, and had ſome knowledge of moſt other games, I could not cope with the ſharpers I met with at the Count de Lauſane's.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE morning after my visit to Madam La Countess, I went to pay my compliments to the Envoy, who was the last man in the world I should have suspected of attaching himself to such a woman as I have just now described; but there is no accounting for these infatuations. He received me with all the cordiality of a Friend; and after we had talked for some time on indifferent subjects, I took an opportunity to mention that I had passed the preceeding evening at Count *de Lausane's*, where I had been introduced by our countryman H—. Oh, I make no doubt

of

of his officiouſneſs, replied the Envoy, for he is the buſieſt Coxcomb I ever knew, and will try to inſinuate himſelf into the favour of every man whom he thinks he may borrow a guinea of. This ſarcaſm of my Friend's a little ſurprized me; for, with a great ſhare of penetration, he poſſeſſed unbounded benevolence; and as he knew I could very well afford a guinea, or a hundred, to aſſiſt a brother Engliſhman on an emergency, there could be no danger of my being injured by adminiſtering to his neceſſities; and I was not ſo great a novice as to carry my good nature to an imprudent length: beſides, the ſentence was uttered with a degree of acrimony which I did not ſee how ſuch an inſignificant creature as H. could excite. The myſtery was however ſoon revealed to me by the Envoy's expreſſing his ſurprize at the familiar footing on which he

was

was admitted to the Counteſs; and his aſtoniſhment that women of a ſuperior underſtanding ſhould be ſo egregiouſly impoſed on by a little ſmart repartee and a few flowery compliments, as to allow him the credit of being a man of genius. I now clearly perceived the cauſe of my Friend's ſpeaking in ſo peeviſh a manner about poor H—; and evidently ſaw, that if the Counteſs was bleſt with a contented Huſband, ſhe had at leaſt a very jealous Lover; but as her Ladyſhip's charms were ſuch as could never have made any impreſſion on my heart, even if it were not already devoted to Lavinia, I felt no uneaſineſs on account of his jealouſy, and was only concerned to ſee a man of his ſuperior ſenſe the dupe of ſo unworthy a woman; for her character unfolded itſelf to me the firſt moment of our acquaintance, and I ſaw ſhe was a compound

pound of art and affectation, without one grain of delicacy, or the ſlighteſt pretence to a ſingle feminine virtue. I ſoon found my Friend was going to make her a viſit that evening, and as he urged me to go with him I conſented, for the ſake of his company; and indeed in ſome meaſure to obſerve how this artificial woman would demean herſelf in the preſence of a lover, whom, if ſhe had judgment enough to diſcriminate between the licentious paſſion of a libertine, and the attachment of a man of ſenſibility, ſhe muſt expect to diſguſt by any indecent converſation. I dined with my Friend, and in the evening we repaired to the Counteſs's together. The good man himſelf, who did not make his appearance the night before, was ready to receive us, and had as much the air of a contented cuckold as ever I ſaw in any human creature.

ture. He was a tall emaciated figure, with a grin of paſſive ſervility on his countenance which gave him the look of a monkey; and he paid the Envoy and me ſuch fulſome compliments upon the honour we did his houſe by our viſit, that it was diſguſting in the extreme; eſpecially to thoſe who ſuſpected, as I did from H—'s inuendos, that the family were in a great meaſure ſupported by his liberality, which was indeed ſo far beyond his means, that in the end it ſunk him into diſgrace as well as indigence; and plunged him at laſt into ſuch extreme diſtreſs, that on finding himſelf removed from his appointment, expoſed to all the evils of poverty, and abandoned by the woman who had ruined him, he ſunk into a ſettled deſpondence; and, it was ſuſpected, put an end to his life by a piſtol. But to return to the Counteſs. I found before we

left the Envoy's that he was going by invitation that evening to meet a literary party, both male and female, whoſe acquaintance the Counteſs exceedingly affected, and who, as they were not of the higheſt claſs, were ambitious of ſuch an opportunity as viſiting her afforded them, of being introduced to the Britiſh Envoy: but we went at rather an early hour, and none of the company being yet arrived, we found her Ladyſhip alone in the drawing-room. The condeſcending Count himſelf took leave as ſoon as he had introduced us, and Madame la Counteſs having modelled both her dreſs and her manners to a greater degree of decency than I expected from her appearance the night before, our converſation, if not much ſeaſoned with wit, was at leaſt untainted by obſcenity; and the half hour which intervened between our arrival and the enterance

of the literati, paſſed off very well. There was however one occurrence which foreboded the ruin, while it betrayed the weakneſs of my Friend. The artful Dame took an opportunity of introducing the ſubject of her huſband's exceſſive parſimony, and complained to the Envoy of his even refuſing to purchaſe a moſt extraordinary bargain of a diamond necklace for her, though it was to be bought for a thouſand florins, and was worth at leaſt double the ſum. While ſhe was ſpeaking of this ornament, I obſerved her, as if accidentally draw one corner of her handkerchief; and by ſo doing, ſhe unveiled a part of her boſom, which, to ſay the truth, was extremely beautiful. A Lover's eyes are ſeldom inattentive to ſuch opportunties of exploring hidden charms: the poor Envoy's were faſcinated in a moment; and a ſigh which ſhe heaved at that inſtant

inſtant, and which ſeemed to proceed from concern at not obtaining the necklace, touched his heart ſo ſenſibly, that if the laſt florin he was maſter of had been neceſſary to procure the toy, he could not have refuſed it to her wiſhes. He therefore politely enquired where it was to be ſold, and as I afterwards diſcovered, preſented her with it the next morning. The uſual hour of viſiting being now arrived, the company came in very ſpeedily, and a converſation enſued which was as diſguſting to a rational ear, as it could be rendered by a priggiſh diſplay of what they thought wit, by ſome part of the circle, and a pedantic affectation of learning by others. They talked of ſciences which they had never ſtudied; decided upon the merit of authors whoſe works they had not taſte to reliſh; and concluded the evening with an elaborate diſcuſſion of

the nature of love; wherein the greater part of the company, and the ladies in particular declared themſelves diſciples of the Platonic ſchool. Such was

"*The feaſt of reaſon and the flow of ſoul,*"

which I partook of at the Counteſs's *Converſazione*, from which I wiſhed myſelf a thouſand times removed; not only on account of the diſguſting impertinence I was obliged by good manners to liſten to, but the confuſion I ſaw my poor friend the Envoy diſcover at having brought me to ſuch an entertainment. The truth was, the Counteſs had formerly been viſited by ſeveral men of real literature, with which Bruſſels abounds, but the infamous character her houſe had acquired by the licentious conduct of its miſtreſs, made them, one by one, relinquiſh her acquaintance; and the crew of low pretenders who had ſo completely ſickened me,

were

were ſubſtituted in their room, to keep up the appearance ſhe was ſo ambitious to maintain, of being conſidered as a *belle eſprit* and a patroneſs of genius. Juſt as our literati were taking their leave, with a multitude of fulſome compliments to Madame la Counteſs and the Envoy, Mr H——, who had introduced me the evening before, came into the room, and with him three perſons, whom he preſented to Madame de Luſane as Engliſh Gentlemen, his very intimate friends, who were come to ſpend a few weeks at Bruſſels before they made the grand tour, and whom he could not deny himſelf the felicity of introducing to her Ladyſhip. I perceived the Envoy was extremely ruffled at this incident, and particularly ſo at the familiar manner of H—'s introducing them; but he had previouſly informed me he had an engagement on

public buſineſs juſt at that hour, which made it impoſſible for him to ſtay to obſerve the Counteſs's conduct towards her new viſitors, and he took his leave with the lour of jealous diſſatisfaction on his brow. I would gladly have departed with him, but as I had no engagement to plead in excuſe, and Madame de Luſane, as well as H—, intreated me to paſs the evening, I could not decently refuſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THE Envoy's carriage no ſooner drove from the door, than the Counteſs threw off the reſtraint ſhe had been under in his preſence; her eyes began to ſparkle with vivacity, and her converſation, as well as her deportment, abounded with every thing which could encourage licentiouſneſs in thoſe around her. At laſt ſhe called for the card-tables, declaring we muſt give her a chance for recovering a ſum ſhe had loſt in the morning to a party who had ſtript her of more than ſhe could afford to diſburſe; and making me the particular object of her attention, placed me at the table next her. Our game was *vingt-*

une, and in the courſe of half an hour, the Counteſs had been ſo unſucceſsful, that ſhe proteſted ſhe could purſue her ill-luck no further, but decline play, and amuſe herſelf with looking over my hand. She at the ſame time called for wine; and the champaign, which was excellent, had ſuch an effect upon my head, ſtill weak from my late illneſs, that I ſoon became incapable of knowing what I did. I believe it will be unneceſſary to ſay, that the pretended travellers introduced by H——, were of that claſs who go abroad to improve there fortunes inſtead of their minds, and that the lady and he were in league with them: our ſtakes increaſed with my delirium, and as I loſt every thing I played for, it was neceſſary, at the breaking up of the party, to call for pen and ink, that I might give drafts upon my banker for the

the ſums I had not caſh to diſcharge. My hand not being ſufficiently ſteady to write theſe drafts myſelf, one of the gentlemen undertook the office, and I ſigned them, without ever looking at the amount. The whole company affected much concern at the ill fortune that had attended me; and Madame de Luſane, in particular, regretted that I had not followed her example, and declined play when I found the tide of ill luck ſo ſtrong againſt me. The gentlemen, at the ſame time, offered to give me an opportunity of revenge the next evening, either at my own hotel or theirs, whichever I choſe; and as I had neglected to order my chariot, from an intention of going home with my friend the Envoy, and one of them had a coach in waiting, he requeſted I would allow him the honour of ſetting me down. I conſented to his

propoſal; and as we were going to the hotel together, the man to whom I had loſt the largeſt ſum, expreſſed great concern at the recollection of an affair of honour which he had till that moment forgot, and which would oblige him to ſet out for Oſtend in the courſe of a few hours. He added, that this unfortunate circumſtance would put it out of his power to attend the party ſettled for the next evening, at my apartment; and as he was going on account of a challenge ſent him by a German officer of very high rank, if either of them ſhould fall in the duel, it would prevent his giving me the opportunity he ſo much wiſhed for, of winning back my draft, unleſs I would take my revenge immediately, and inſtead of deferring the party to the next evening, ſit down upon our arrival at the hotel. This propoſal

was

was ſeconded by H— and the reſt of the company; (for we were all five ſtuffed into the coach) and I yielded my conſent, without conſidering how incapable I was at that period of playing with them, even if they were not ſharpers, upon equal terms; for the fumes of Madame de Luſane's champaign were ſtill prevalent in my head, though a little abated of their firſt fury.

CHAP. IX.

WHEN we reached the hotel, I ordered wine and cards, and after drinking a glaſs or two of rheniſh to aſſuage my thirſt, I ſat down like a victim deſtined to deſtruction. My ill luck purſued me unremittedly, and as I once more applied to champaign to recruit my ſpirits, I ſoon became inſenſible to what was done around me, nor did I once recover my reaſon until I awaked next day, and found myſelf in bed. The firſt thing I did, was to ſend my valet to the hotel where theſe miſcreants lodged, to requeſt they would let me know the amount of my drafts in their hands. But they had

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ſet out in two poſt chaiſes, as ſoon as they returned from their viſit to me, and the maſter of the houſe could give no other account of them, than that they took the road to Calais.

I now flew to my friend the Envoy in an agony of deſpair, for I had a preſentiment of the ruin they had drawn upon me; and, by his advice, ſent diſpatches to England immediately, to prevent the negociation of my drafts, for I had no idea of my having ſigned any other papers. As ſoon as the meſſengers were ſent off, the Envoy and I repaired to the Counteſs's, who either was, or pretended to be, ignorant of every thing concerning her late viſitors and expreſſed the deepeſt concern at the loſs I had ſuſtained. She even ſhed tears on the occaſion, leſt, as our play had unfortunately com-

commenced at her houſe, her *dear friend* the Envoy ſhould entertain an ill opinion of her, and withdraw that friendſhip which ſhe valued more than worlds. The poor deluded lover could not ſee her weep without being affected in the tendereſt manner: he intreated her to be aſſured that he never entertained the ſlighteſt idea of her being acceſſary to his friend's misfortune in any other way, than by admitting the miſcreants who had plundered him to her houſe: that he had often expreſſed his diſapprobation at her receiving the viſits of all ſtrangers indiſcriminately; and that he hoped the diſagreeable conſequences which had now ariſen from her doing ſo, would warn her from repeating the indiſcretion.

But neither the lady's tears or aſſeverations could convince me of her innocence

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ſo entirely as they did my infatuated friend: I ſuſpected, from many circumſtances, that ſhe was in league with the ſharpers who had plundered me; and my ſuſpicions proved to be too well founded a few months afterwards; for, upon the Envoy's being removed from his appointment, in conſequence of ſome illicit practices which he connived at to oblige her, ſhe abandoned him in the midſt of his diſtreſſes, and threw herſelf into the arms of that very Mr. H—— who introduced me to her acquaintance, and who was then living at Rome in a ſtile of magnificent luxury.

As I found my friend did not appear diſpoſed to quit his weeping Counteſs very haſtily, I took my leave of him there, and finding my carriage ready at the door when I returned to the hotel, ſtept into it, and

and made the beſt of my way to Calais; where I propoſed hiring a veſſel to convey me to Dover, in order to prevent, if poſſible, the fatal effects of my late imprudent conduct more effectually than the diſpatches I ſent before me could do.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I Got to Calais as expeditiouſly as it was poſſible for horſes to convey me; but upon my arrival there, I had the vexation to find the three meſſengers, who had been diſpatched before me, not yet embarked, and the wind blowing ſo ſtrong from the north-weſt, that no veſſel would venture out of the harbour. I however found a Captain, who, for an extraordinary price, engaged to put to ſea, and I determined to embark in the very teeth of the tempeſt. While the ſhip was getting ready to ſail, I made diligent enquiry after Mr. H—— and his three aſſociates, whom

whom I hoped to find detained there like my meſſengers. I readily gained tidings of them, by deſcribing their perſons; and had the mortification to hear they had arrived juſt ſixteen hours before me; and as the wind was then fair for Dover, had embarked in a veſſel which was juſt ſetting ſail, and probably reached the oppoſite ſhore in a very ſhort time. This doubled my anxiety to get on board; and the ſhip which I had hired being now ready, I embarked, without waiting until the ſtorm abated. We got out of the harbour with infinite difficulty, but it was impoſſible to make any way, as the wind blew ſo ſtrong againſt us. In ſhort, it was full twenty hours, from the time of my leaving Calais to my landing at Dover, and the ſharpers had, by that means, an advantage of rather more than a day and a half

half of me. On my arrival in London, I drove directly to my Banker's, and found, to my extreme mortification, that two gentlemen had been there the day before with drafts of mine, to the amount of five thouſand pounds, payable on ſight, which the Banker had given them caſh for, though he had only two thouſand pounds of mine in his hands; for as I had always uſed his houſe, he politely ſaid, he could not poſſibly proteſt a draft of mine, let the ſum be ever ſo conſiderable.

He told me, however, that he was exceedingly ſorry for his having acted ſo incautiouſly: a little afterwards, when three perſons, not the ſame who called with the drafts, brought him a bond of mine for three thouſand pounds, which they wanted him to let them have the money for,

for, or at leaſt a part of it; but he declined having any concern in the affair. Upon deſcribing their perſons to me, I found that H——d himſelf was one of the two who called with the drafts; but I could not poſitively aſcertain whether thoſe who offered the bond were his companions or not.

I took the Banker with me directly to a Magiſtrate, in order to ſee what could be done to prevent the further ſucceſs of this villainous conſpiracy; and while we were conſulting him, a Clerk came running after us from the banking houſe, with information that Mr. ——, a Banker in the city, had juſt called at the office, to enquire (as he knew I kept caſh there) whether he might with ſafety negociate a bond of mine for two thouſand pounds, payable

payable in ſix months, which a Jew Broker had been ſolicitous with him to diſcount, but that as the ſum was rather large, he did not chuſe to do it, until he could be aſſured whether my eſtate in Devonſhire was under ſettlement, or had any incumbrance of mortgages upon it. This intelligence ſtruck me like a clap of thunder: I ſaw inevitable ruin ſtare me in the face, and could not help conſidering it as a puniſhment due to the mean artifice I had practiſed on Lavinia, by inſinuating to her that my affairs were in the very ſituation I now feared they would be reduced to. The Magiſtrate I applied to, who was a man of ſenſe, and very converſant in the law, directed hand-bills to be immediately printed off and diſperſed, and advertiſements inſerted in every newſpaper, to prevent the negociating of the bonds

bonds which had been offered to the two Bankers, and of any others which might yet be diſcounted: but he told me, at the ſame time, that if they were already in the hands of Jews, as he apprehended, it would not be an eaſy thing to evade the payment of them; for they have witneſſes at command on every occaſion, and if a Broker can prove by the oaths of thoſe who ſay they were preſent, that he gave a valuable conſideration for a note or bond, and tranſacted the buſineſs on the uſual terms of diſcount, the law will ſupport him in his demand of payment at the time appointed. Every ſtep was immediately taken which the Magiſtrate adviſed, and expreſſes ſent from the Secretary of State's office to all the ſea-ports, to prevent the miſcreants from leaving the kingdom; but all proved ineffectual: they had

had made too good uſe of their time to be overtaken; and after leaving ſecurities of mine in the hands of different Brokers, to the amount of 27,000 pounds, had eſcaped with their booty beyond the reach of puniſhment, and left me incumbered with a debt of 30,000 pounds, beſides the loſs of the 2,000l. in the hands of my Banker. As ſoon as the advertiſements, inſerted for that purpoſe, had brought me to the knowledge of what had been thus fraudulently obtained from me, I authorized my agent to call in a mortgage of 40,000 pounds, which I had upon a very conſiderable eſtate in L—ſhire, and began, in my own mind, to arrange my ſtile of living, in ſuch a manner as the income of my eſtate in Devonſhire would enable me to ſupport. And as the vanity of youth was now abated, and all my hopes of happineſs

happineſs concentered in Lavinia. I flattered myſelf that I ſhould ſtill enjoy more felicity with her in the quiet of a country life, than I had ever taſted in the diſſipated ſcenes of gaiety and faſhion.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THREE days were now elapſed ſince my arrival in London, and I had not yet been to pay my compliments to Lavinia. The truth was, I felt myſelf ſo degraded (not by the meer loſs of fortune, but the manner of my loſing it) that I did not know how to appear before her. I wrote, however, to acquaint her with the particulars of my recent misfortune, which had been greatly exaggerated by report, and to aſſure her, that as ſoon as my preſent extreme hurry of buſineſs ſhould a little relax, and allow me the command of a few hours, I would employ them in

paying my reſpects to her. She detained the ſervant while ſhe wrote an anſwer, which will be found, with all her ſubſequent letters, in the packet inſcribed *Letters from Lavinia to Albert.* I preſerved them not only for the pleaſure I took in their frequent peruſal, but becauſe I thought it would be injuſtice to the world, as well as to her memory, to deſtroy ſo precious a treaſure: for they were dictated by a heart abounding with every virtue which can dignify human nature, and written in a ſtile of elegance which muſt have charmed the reader, even though the ſentiments expreſſed in it had leſs deſerved his admiration.

I waited upon Lavinia the next day after I received her letter, and ſhe met me with a ſmile of pleaſure and affection, which

which evinced, that my change of circumſtances had produced no change in her regard; and the few hours I then paſſed with her were by far the happieſt of my life.

As I was engaged to meet my agent early in the afternoon, and my converſation with Lavinia had frequent interruptions from one or other of the family coming into the room, I had not time to come to a full explanation of my former ambiguous behaviour, or to ſolicit, as I intended, the felicity of ſharing my remaining fortune with her; for though much diminiſhed, I believed it ſtill ſufficient to ſupport us in a genteel and comfortable manner. I contrived, however, to give her ſo many intimations of my intention, and to advert ſo frequently to ſome

circumſtances of a tender nature which occurred at my laſt viſit to her, that it was impoſſible ſhe ſhould remain ignorant of my honourable regard; and at our parting I begged leave to wait upon her again the next day.

My heart now dilated with the happineſs I thought myſelf upon the point of enjoying. I almoſt bleſt the accident which had haſtened my return from Bruſſels to unite me to Lavinia; and anticipated, in idea, the calm felicity I ſhould partake with her when ſettled at my paternal ſeat in Devonſhire, which only wanted a little improvement to make it one of the ſweeteſt retreats in England.

But, alas! the tempeſt of ill fortune had not yet ſpent its violence, a clap of thun-

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der more tremendous than the laſt, was upon the point of ſtriking me, and at a moment when I believed the danger over.

Such is the inſtability of human happineſs,—the vanity of human hopes!

CHAP. XII.

MY agent, who was a lawyer of conſiderable note, came to me at the hour appointed, but with an air of concern upon his countenance, which forboded ſome new misfortune. To be brief—he informed me, that upon taking the proper meaſures for calling in the mortgage I had upon an eſtate in L——ſhire, he diſcovered, to his inexpreſſible concern, that before my father lent the money upon it, it had been mortgaged for 40,500 pounds: that from the ill management of the owner, and the accident of an inundation ſweeping away the banks, which would coſt

ſome

ſome thouſand pounds to repair, it was extremely diminiſhed in its value, and that I could not touch one ſhilling of my money until the eſtate ſhould be ſold in conſequence of a legal proceſs, and the prior mortgage paid to the utmoſt farthing. It is impoſſible for words to convey an idea of what I felt upon receiving this intelligence. I was almoſt frantic with deſpair, not from the loſs of fortune, but the loſs of my Lavinia, whom is was impoſſible for me to be ſo great a villain as to involve in my diſtreſs. In ſhort, my diſtraction was ſuch, that I ſhould have put an end to my exiſtence if I had not been prevented; for I was naturally of an impetuous temper, ſtrong paſſions, and keen ſenſibility; and the bar which was thus thrown in the way of my marriage with Lavinia, at the moment when I believed nothing

but death could prevent it, redoubled, a hundred fold, the diſtreſs of ſeeing myſelf precipitated from affluence, or at leaſt from eaſy competence, to a ſtate of dependant poverty, and ſhook my fortitude in ſuch a manner, that I was very near ſinking under the blow. A letter from Lavinia, expreſſive of the tendereſt ſympathy and ſolicitude for my welfare, was the firſt thing that recalled my unſettled reaſon, and taught me the duty of exerting that fortitude which Providence had endowed me with, to combat the diſtreſſes that ſurrounded me. She requeſted me to call forth all my reſolution at this trying criſis.——She urged the unmanly weakneſs, as well as the criminality of giving myſelf up to deſpair; and painted, with all the force of deſcriptive eloquence, the proſpects which muſt immediately open to my view, if I would reſolve to employ my

my talents in the ſervice of the ſtate; where my family connections, and the friends I had myſelf acquired, could not fail of inſuring me an honourable and lucrative appointment. In ſhort, ſhe uſed every argument that good ſenſe and ſincere affection could ſuggeſt, to reconcile me to my ſituation; and concluded by intreating me, if I had any regard for her peace of mind, to rouſe myſelf from my deſpondence, and not diſgrace the character I had eſtabliſhed in the world, by a puſillanimous retreat from difficulties.

Such a letter as I have been ſpeaking of, if written by a mere theoriſt, would have made very little impreſſion on my mind; but Lavinia's advice carried the authority of example with it; for ſhe had perſonally experienced the very ſame miſ-

fortune I was now involved in, and had ſupported it with the magnanimity of a hero. Yes, thou dear idol of thy Albert's heart, (exclaimed I, as I finiſhed her letter) your peace of mind ſhall ever be my tendereſt concern! I will live,—I will exert myſelf at your command, and following the glorious example of fortitude which you have ſet me, attend with patience the events of time, and not diſgrace the preference you honour me with, by ſhrinking from thoſe evils you have had the courage to encounter.

From that moment, my mind became compoſed; I ſent immediately for my agent, and gave him authority to ſell my eſtate in Devonſhire, which was a good thouſand pounds a year, and then repaired to Lavinia (whom I reſolved to make

make the directreſs of my future conduct) in order to conſult with her about the applications I ne[illegible]mined on making to my miniſterial friends, whoſe intereſt I well knew could ſoon procure me ſome appointment that would throw me into fortune's way, and give me a chance of riſing by degrees to ſome lucrative employment, which would enable me to ſupport the expence of a family, and paſs the remainder of my life with my beloved Lavinia.

CHAP. XIII.

THE reception which Lavinia gave me when I waited upon her, made her a thouſand times dearer to my heart than ſhe had ever been before; I now adored her as a being of ſuperior rank, while I ſtill loved her as a woman: and I wiſhed, with all the ardour of eſteem and paſſion mingled, that we could both forget the elevated ſphere we once had moved in, and retiring to ſome unfrequented village in the ſouth of France, where the remnant of my ruined fortune would procure us the meer conveniencies of life, renounce its glittering vanities,

nities, and ſhew the world how little true felicity depends upon its idol grandeur.

All gracious heaven! what happineſs might I have known if I had had the courage to mention my wiſhes to Lavinia! but the remembrance of my conduct towards her, while I was yet in the meridian of proſperity, made my heart recoil whenever I attempted to ſpeak to her on the ſubject. What, ſaid I to myſelf, ſhall the man who did not offer to ſhare his affluence with this ineſtimable woman, preſume to ſolicit her hand when he is reduced to a ſtate of penury? No, I will embark alone upon the ebb of fortune, and wait for its returning flow, before I dare to mention marriage to her; for it would be injuſtice to the world, and an eternal ſource of ſelf reproach

reproach to me, if I were to bury ſuch a jewel in oblivion.

After talking over with Lavinia all the circumſtances of my unhappy ſituation, ſhe conjured me not to loſe a moment in applying to my friends on the ſubject I had mentioned to her, and requeſted that I would wait upon the miniſter the next morning.

She then told me, with a ſmile, that ſhe had been ſcribbling a little ſonnet the night before, and if I would give her leave, ſhe would ſing it to me. She then ſat down to the harpſichord, and ſung the following ſtanzas to a very beautiful air.

SONNET.

SONNET.

WHILE Fortune, fickle ſmiler,
Flings round her ſunny ray;
And Hope, life's ſoft beguiler,
With roſes ſtrews the way!
In fond purſuit of pleaſure,
Each roves as he's inclin'd,
Nor knows, as yet, the treaſure
Of a ſuperior mind.

But if a cloud o'er-cloſes
Bright Fortune's radient glow;
And Hope inverts her roſes,
A while their thorns to ſhow;
The coward ſhrinks deſponding,
Scar'd by the dreary gloom,
And from the world abſconding,
Devoted meets his doom.

Not ſo the man, by nature
Magnanimous of ſoul;
He marks, unchang'd in feature,
The ſtorm around him roll:
And with his fate contending,
Undaunted waits, to view
Fortune again aſcending,
And Hope her blooms renew.

When Lavinia had ended her ſong, I took her hand, and preſſed it to my lips; ſhe folded mine between both of her's in return, and, with a look of ineffable ſweetneſs, aſſured me, that whatever might be the event of my preſent critical ſituation, it would make no change in her friendſhip. This generous declaration, and the calm ſhe had diffuſed over my ſoul by the enchanting harmony of her voice, and the moral leſſon conveyed in her poetry, made my heart more at eaſe than I believed

lieved a few hours before it ever could be again; and I took my leave with a determination to emulate the example of fortitude ſhe had ſo nobly ſet me.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

I Prepared to pay my compliments to the miniſter next morning: but how different were my feelings now, while dreſſing to attend his levee, from what they had been when preparing to wait upon him on any former occaſion!

It was then one gentleman paying his compliments to another on terms of equality, or going to aſk ſome trivial boon in behalf of a friend. It was now an indigent man ſoliciting favours for himſelf, and begging employment, that he might earn the means of ſubſiſting. What a humi-

humiliating change to one who had always prided himſelf on his independence, and who, during three ſeſſions of Parliament, ſome years before, while he repreſented a very reſpectable borough, never once voted with that very miniſter whom he was now going to addreſs as a ſupplicant, though he had all the time eſteemed his private virtues, and viſited him occaſionally on the footing of an acquaintance!

As ſoon as I entered the circle, the miniſter noticed me, and politely requeſted that I would favour him with my company after the levee was over, as he wiſhed to converſe with me on a ſubject which he could not then introduce.

I withdrew a little upon his intimation, and giving way to ſeveral perſons who appeared

appeared ſolicitous to ſpeak to him, I began to reflect upon the number of ſuitors then preſent, many of whom ſeemed to have a juſter claim to regard than I could poſſibly pretend to, who had drawn ſo large a ſhare of my misfortune on myſelf. It happened to be juſt after the concluſion of a long and bloody war; and I obſerved among the croud, a number of officers, ſome of whom had loſt one limb, others two, and others again, who, from their emaciated appearance, had evidently ſacrificed their health in the ſervice of their country. I attended to the converſation which theſe unfortunate veterans held with each other, while they were waiting in hopes of catching the miniſter's eye over the ſhoulders of thoſe obtruding coxcombs who had preſt forward to the front of the circle; and I heard, with

no

no leſs concern than ſurpriſe, that very few, if any, of theſe brave ſoldiers had, after many days attendance, been ſo fortunate as to be obſerved by the miniſter; and that they now deſpaired of obtaining any other reward for the exertions which had incapacitated them from future ſervice, beſides the paltry pittance of halfpay, and a life of neceſſitous obſcurity.

As the time for the levee's breaking up drew near, the company diſperſed, and I was at length left alone with the miniſter, who led me into another room, and expreſſed his concern at the loſs I had ſuſtained at Bruſſels, in terms of the moſt obliging civility; for no man had a more extenſive knowledge of human nature, or knew better how to adapt his language to the perſon he addreſt; which perhaps contributed

tributed as much as his great political talents to continue him ſo long at the helm. After aſſuring me of his having felt for the event with the ſincerity of a friend, he added, with a ſmile, that it could however be only a temporary inconvenience to a man of my abilities; for that government would not be niggardly or ſlow in recompencing ſuch talents as mine, if employed in the public ſervice; and that as ſoon as he heard of the accident, he had caſt his eye on an appointment which he ſhould have offered immediately, if he had not thought it too delicate a point to interfere in, without knowing how I ſtood affected. I thanked him for the friendly attention he ſhewed to my intereſt; and aſſured him, that I conſidered it as a mark of ſingular generoſity from one, whom, while I eſteemed him as a man, I had always oppoſed

poſed as a miniſter, during the few years that I had the honour of a ſeat in Parliament. He replied, that he reſpected, he admired ſuperior talents, whether employed to ſupport or oppoſe his meaſures; and that he had always exceedingly lamented that the acquaintance we had formed at ſchool, and improved at the univerſity, could not prevail on me to examine his miniſterial conduct a little more impartially: for, if I had once done ſo, the ſound judgment I was maſter of, would have informed me, that thoſe very meaſures which I diſapproved the moſt, were perfectly conſiſtent with the true intereſt of the people: for, ſaid he, the exigencies of ſtate muſt be provided for, or every thing will fall into confuſion.

He

He then took an opportunity of mentioning the approaching general election: complimented me highly on my elocution; and particularly on the only ſpeech I ever made, which did not decidedly condemn his adminiſtration. He ſaid it was a maſterly performance, both in point of ſound argument and good oratory; and enquired whether I had not an inclination to reſume my ſeat for the borough of ———, where government were now certain of a large majority; and as one of the preſent members was not a man of ſtriking abilities, he ſhould be happy to nominate me for his ſucceſſor. I now ſaw that there was at leaſt as much policy as friendſhip in this ſkilful miniſter's deſire of obliging me; for his intereſt in the borough he had mentioned to me, was by no means ſo powerful as he repreſented it. The truth was, the

the corporation were extremely diſguſted at the conduct of both their preſent repreſentatives, who had voted on ſeveral occaſions in direct oppoſition to their will: and I had already received a meſſage from them, to expreſs their concern for having thrown me out at the laſt election, and deſiring that I would offer myſelf a candidate immediately on the concluſion of the preſent ſeſſion of Parliament. I replied to the miniſter's polite offer by a bow of civility, and ſaid that I muſt beg leave to conſider the affair before I gave a poſitive anſwer. During our whole converſation, he did not drop the leaſt hint reſpecting the laſt, and by much the ſevereſt of my misfortunes; I mean my loſs of the mortgage, which I ſuſpected was ſo amply ſecured; but he might be acquainted with it notwithſtanding: for he had more ad-

dreſs than any other man in the world, and never put a perſon out of humour by talking on a diſagreeable ſubject, unleſs it was unavoidable. From the moment he mentioned a ſeat in Parliament to me, I determined to be extremely on my guard, and not to accept any favour which ſhould oblige me to ſacrifice my integrity at the ſhrine of intereſt. But there are many ſituations which a man may occupy, and yet preſerve his independence, and it was to theſe alone that I looked up: for I would rather have borne all the rigours of poverty, and even renounced my beloved Lavinia, than ſuffered my name to be enrolled in that liſt he was ſaid to carry in his pocket-book, where the price of almoſt every member of Parliament was noted oppoſite to his name.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

IN the evening of the day that I had been to pay my reſpects to the miniſter, I made a viſit to Lavinia, and found her in better ſpirits and more gay than I had known her for ſome months before. She talked to me of her tragedy; aſked my advice about the arrangement of the fable, and ſeemed determined to apply herſelf arduouſly to an undertaking, which, if ſucceſsful, would be equally productive of profit and fame. I encouraged her to proceed in a deſign which I well knew her talents were adequate to the completion of. But I expreſſed my doubts, whether a comedy

might not have a better chance of immediate acceptance from a manager. She agreed with me that it certainly would; and ingenuouſly acknowledged, that the proprietor ſhe had been introduced to, had made ſome objections to her tragic ſcheme, and wiſhed her rather to purſue the comic line of writing: but at that time, ſhe ſaid, her mind was ſo occupied by melancholy ideas, that it would have been impoſſible for her to attempt any work where wit and ſprightly dialogue were neceſſary; and though the greater part of our modern comedies did not abound with either, ſhe thought them both indiſpenſable.

She then ſketched out to me the general out-line of her intended drama; and did it in ſo correct and maſterly a manner,

ner, that I was convinced her judgment was equal to her genius; for ſhe adhered ſtrictly to every rule preſcribed by Ariſtotle, without having ever looked into his works; and made good the adage, "That "great talents want no preceptor." She afterwards mentioned to me that ſhe had thoughts of removing from her friend's houſe, to a lodging ſomewhere in the environs of London: for that, while ſhe was a viſitor, it was impoſſible to purſue her ſtudies, from the frequent interruptions of company, and the neceſſity good manners laid her under of attending the ladies of the family to the public amuſements, of which they were extremely fond, and always wiſhed to have her of their party. She ſaid, however, that this was only a diſtant idea, for ſhe ſhould not conclude upon any thing at preſent; and added,

ded, that the ſcheme of going into the country while ſhe was writing for the ſtage, had been ſuggeſted to her friend Mrs. ——, by the proprietor, whom ſhe met at that lady's houſe; and that Mrs. —— mentioned it to her; but deſired that ſhe would go but a very little way from town, as the gentleman juſt mentioned, whom ſhe was to look to for enſuring her work acceptance at the theatre, would favour her with his advice in the writing of it; and as no man was more capable of bringing a play to perfection by ſuch aſſiſtance, ſhe ought not, on any account, to remove out of the reach of his viſits, or of viſiting him occaſionally, if he required it. I have already acknowledged, that there was a ſtrong tincture of jealouſy in my compoſition; it now took alarm at the circumſtance of the proprietor's wiſh-

ing

ing to have Lavinia removed from the family she was with, and placed near enough to London to allow of his visiting her without discovery, if he should have any sinister motives for concealing his acquaintance with her. I was several times on the point of explaining my inquietude, and intreating Lavinia not to quit the house of her friend: but I checked myself, by reflecting that I had no right to dictate to her: that as the necessitous state of her affairs required those exertions, which she could not make while in her present situation, it would be an act of inhumanity, as well as injustice, to lay her under such a restriction; and perhaps throw an eternal bar in the way of her acquiring both fame and affluence. For great as her talents were, I yet knew the necessity of some powerful patronage to bring them for-

ward to the world with *eclat*, and ſecure them that admiration which, however well deſerved, is ſeldom beſtowed, unleſs ſome leading judge of literary merit gives the ſanction of his applauſe: and then the world chime in with his opinion, without taking the trouble to inform themſelves whether it is founded in juſtice or partiality.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

WHILE I was at breakfaſt the morning after my viſit to the miniſter's levee, I received a note from him, to deſire I would, if poſſible, call upon him at eleven o'clock that day; or if I was then engaged, he begged to ſee me the following morning at the ſame hour. I anſwered his card, by aſſuring him I would attend him at the time appointed that day, and waited upon him accordingly. He received me with much ſeeming regard, and told me, that as he had juſt then a great deal of buſineſs on his hands, he muſt enquire rather abruptly, whether I ſhould

like to go to Ireland as ſecretary to the Lord Lieutenant; for that the ſecretary had written to deſire leave to retire, on account of ill health, and if that appointment would be agreeable to me, I ſhould be immediately nominated his ſucceſſor: but that he muſt obſerve there would be a neceſſity for my ſetting out for that kingdum in the courſe of three days, if I accepted the appointment. The ſituation appeared too tempting to be refuſed. I aſſured the miniſter how ſenſible I was of his friendſhip in complying with my wiſhes ſo ſpeedily; and after receiving ſome inſtructions from him on the occaſion, and being deſired to call on him again the next day, I took my leave, and went directly home. My firſt buſineſs was to write Lavinia an account of the event. I afterwards ſent for my agent, to inform myſelf

ſelf what might be the probable ſum accruing from the ſale of my eſtate, and give him orders for the arrangment of every thing as ſoon as it was diſpoſed of. From that time, I was in one continued round of hurry and buſineſs until my departure, and could not find even one hour to call upon Lavinia, until the evening before I ſet out on my journey; I then ſupped with her at her friend's houſe, but as there was company, we had no time for any private converſation, and I could only find an opportunity to requeſt ſhe would allow me the pleaſure of correſponding with her while I ſhould remain in Ireland.

Thus was I once more ſeparated from Lavinia, without poſitively explaining my ſentiments to her. It is true, my whole behaviour ſince my return from Devon-

ſhire, was ſuch as muſt leave her little doubt of my honourable intentions; but there was ſtill a myſtery in my not avowing them, which could not fail of ſtriking ſo delicate a mind as her's, and giving her much uneaſineſs. Yet ſhe never betrayed any reſentment at my thus trifling with her peace of mind; but ſeemed, on every occaſion, ſo ſolicitous to promote my happineſs in preference to her own, that ſhe wiſhed me only to conſider what would be moſt conducive to it, and not to pay any regard to what ſhe might ſuffer from my inſtability of conduct, or even from my entirely abandoning her, if either inclination or intereſt ſhould induce me to give my hand to any other woman.

Had Lavinia been of a cold phlegmatic temper, this noble diſintereſtedneſs would

would have been leſs worthy of admiration: but her paſſions were warm, and her boſom tremblingly alive to every touch of joy or ſorrow; yet her reaſon was ſufficiently ſtrong to regulate not only her conduct, but her wiſhes; and though ſhe felt the thrills of ſenſibility, ſhe always preſerved an abſolute dominion over herſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

ON my arrival in Dublin, I found the court there infinitely more brilliant than I expected, though I had heard much of its gaiety. The Viceroy himſelf had been a man of gallantry in his younger days, and though now in the decline of life, was ſtill an admirer of beauty. This circumſtance, and his excellency's being a widower, drew every woman into the circle, who ſuppoſed her charms ſufficiently attractive to give her a chance of captivating his heart; and as the ladies of Ireland are in general handſome, many of them indeed ſuperlatively ſo, the Caſtle on a ball-

night

night, preſented a diſplay of lovelineſs, which, I believe, few courts in Europe could rival. Among the beauties who ſhone in this enchanting circle, there were two young ladies whom the Lord Lieutenant honoured with diſtinguiſhing marks of attention. They were the nieces of an Iriſh Peer, and ſiſters; yet ſo unlike each other, it ſeemed as if nature had formed them with a deſign to give the world two models of perfection in the different kinds of beauty: one was a blond, the other a brunette. One had all the majeſty of Minerva, and, without a taint of haughtineſs, appeared as if ſhe was born to fill a throne: The other had ſuch a playful ſprightlineſs about her, that it gave new luſtre to the varying radiance of her eyes; new lovelineſs to the perfect ſymmetry of her form; and when ſhe danced, it was with ſuch

aſtoniſh-

aſtoniſhing lightneſs, and harmony of motion, tnat ſhe ſeemed a beauteous ſpirit playing in the air, and ſcarcely deigning to touch the ground ſhe moved over. If my boſom had not been wholly poſſeſſed by the idea of Lavinia, I ſhould certainly have become enamoured of one of theſe enchanting beings; for I can hardly call them by the name of women: but the recent proofs ſhe had given me of her regard, and the ſervices ſhe had rendered me, by awaking my mind from the ſtupor which diſtreſs had plunged it into, combined the ties of gratitude with thoſe of affection, and fixed her ſole miſtreſs of my heart.

Lavinia was not inattentive to her promiſe of writing regularly to me; but though I always received her letters with pleaſure,

pleaſure, I was ſo much occupied by the buſineſs of my department, and the part I was obliged to bear in the diſſipations of the Caſtle, that I had not leiſure to think much of any thing but what was immediately connected with the ſcene before me; and her letters often lay unanſwered for a conſiderable time, or were replied to only by apologies for not being a more punctual correſpondent. Oh Heaven! why did I ſuffer any thing to interfere with thoſe attentions ſhe was entitled to by a variety of claims? My negligence preyed upon her mind: ſhe feared that abſence had weaned my affection from her, and even fancied herſelf ſupplanted in my regard by ſome fairer rival, indeed by one of the beautiful girls I have juſt mentioned. Theſe ſuſpicions made her change the ſtyle of herletters. They were no longer the

effuſions

effuſions of a ſoul replete with tenderneſs, and breathing all its thoughts without reſerve. There was a coldneſs in her expreſſions, and an increaſing formality in the concluſion of every letter, which awaked my jealous ſenſibility, and made me ſuſpect, in my turn, that I had a rival in the affections of Lavinia: I even caſt my ſuſpicions on the gentleman who had wiſhed her to remove from the houſe of her friend, in order to attend to the comedy he was to aſſiſt in the completion of; and on whoſe account I have already mentioned my feeling great uneaſineſs before I ſet out for Dublin. It will appear ſtrange to the reader, that I ſhould not at once perceive from whence the alteration of Lavinia's ſtyle proceeded: but jealouſy, when once ſhe finds admiſſion to the heart, ſpreads a per-

a perverting miſt before the eyes of reaſon; and whatever is viewed though that murky atmoſphere, ſeems dark and ſuſpicious to our deluded ſight.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

I Had now been juſt ſix months in Dublin, and, though I was not much acquainted with buſineſs on my arrival there, I found no difficulty, hitherto, in diſcharging the duties of my office, with credit to myſelf, and to the Miniſter who had appointed me: but there were now ſome affairs coming on the tapis which I highly diſapproved of, and could not take a ſhare in promoting. The Lord Lieutenant received inſtructions from England to propoſe a union of the two kingdoms, and to ſupport the propoſition with all his influence in both houſes of the Iriſh Parliament.—

Upon

Upon the arrival of the diſpatches with theſe unwelcome orders, I found that I was to be employed in tampering with all thoſe members whoſe votes it might be poſſible to obtain by bribes or promiſes; and as my heart revolted at the idea of accepting ſuch a commiſſion, I determined to give up my appointment rather than my integrity; and requeſted leave of the Vice-roy to return to England, under pretence that my private affairs required my immediate preſence there. His Excellency ſhewed much diſſatisfaction at my requeſt; and went ſo far as to hint, that I made an ungrateful return to the Miniſter who had nominated me, by flying from my ſituation at a time when my addreſs might be ſerviceable in promoting the ſucceſs of a ſcheme he had ſo much at heart. But even gratitude could not perſuade me to act againſt my

my conſcience. I was determined on reſigning; and, in the courſe of a month, another Secretary was appointed to ſucceed me, and I ſet out on my return to London.

Immediately upon my arrival, I went to the Miniſter, who received me with an imperious and diſſatisfied air, which, however, he tried to ſoften; for by this time he had convinced himſelf that the majority of the electors in the borough I had formerly repreſented, were determined to throw out one of their preſent members, and to elect me at the enſuing General Election: ſo that he ſuppreſſed his indignation againſt the offending ſecretary, in hopes of gaining the future ſenator: and gloſſing over the circumſtance which he knew occaſioned my reſignation, he affected

fected to feel much concern that my private affairs had obliged me to leave Ireland at ſo critical a juncture, and at the very moment when my talents might have been ſo beneficial to the Viceroy. He then added, that if I had occaſion for pecuniary aſſiſtance, and would have mentioned it to him, he ſhould, as a friend, have been happy to have ſupplied my wants: and, without waiting for my anſwer, introduced the ſubject of the borough I have juſt mentioned; ſaid, he was well aſſured my late reſignation could not proceed from any want of attachment to him, or any change in my opinion reſpecting the uprightneſs of his public meaſures; and that he would, therefore, as a further proof of his confidence in me, have me immediately nominated a candidate for the borough of ———, where the decided majority he could command,

mand, would inſure my re-inſtatement as their repreſentative at the General Election, which was to come on in a few months.

His duplicity, upon this occaſion, excited my reſentment. I now ſaw clearly through his deſign, in ſending me to Dublin, and was determined not to become the dupe of his artifice. I therefore told him, in a civil, but determined manner, that I muſt decline the honour he intended me, of uniting his intereſt with mine in the borough of ———, in order to inſure my election. That I underſtood from ſeveral letters I had received while in Ireland, that a large majority of the voters had already declared in my favour; and that, if I ever obtained a ſeat in Parliament, it muſt be on my own foundation, and not by miniſterial

ſterial favour; for that I was reſolved to preſerve my independence, and never to become the creature of any party. This declaration, and the reſolute tone in which I made it, left the Miniſter no further hopes of drawing me into his ſervice. And, as I ſaw he could not, without much difficulty, reſtrain the dictates of his reſentment, I took my leave, by aſſuring him, that, as a man, I ſhould always acknowledge the favour he had done me, by my late appointment, but as a Member of the Houſe of Commons, (if ever I ſhould again have the honour of a ſeat in that Aſſembly) I muſt not ſuffer a ſenſe of private obligations to influence my conduct; but either ſupport or oppoſe his meaſures, as my judgment told me they were likely to prove beneficial or injurious to the State.

Thus ended my connection with a Miniſter, who, under the ſhew of friendſhip, had endeavoured to ſeduce me into his intereſt, and add one more penſioner to the liſt he had already burthened the treaſury with.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

AFTER my visit to the Minister was over, I went to pay my compliments to Lavinia, who was as yet unacquainted with my arrival in London. Her lodgings (which she had removed to soon after I set out for Ireland) were about two miles from town, and in an obscure situation; and the house itself, though neat, had rather a mean appearance. The door was opened to me by a decent elderly woman, who shewed me up to the apartment where Lavinia was sitting at work, and in a dress which indicated the greatest economy. It is impossible for words to convey an idea

of her agitation upon ſeeing me enter the room. She ſeemed at firſt ſo overjoyed at the unexpected interview, that ſhe was ready to fly into my arms: but recollecting herſelf inſtantaneouſly, ſhe drew back, and aſſumed an air of reſerve, which chilled me to the ſoul, and obliged me to pauſe for a few moments before I could ſpeak to her. As ſoon as I recovered myſelf, I expreſſed my concern at finding her ſo meanly lodged. She replied, that ſhe had at length accompliſhed the difficult taſk of moderating her deſires to her fortune, and had no longer a wiſh for any thing but bare conveniency. I then inquired what ſucceſs ſhe had met with in her dramatic purſuits, for her letters of the laſt two months had not ſaid any thing on the ſubject. She waved her head, and with a melancholy ſmile replied, that her hopes of ever bring-

ing

ing any piece upon the ſtage were now entirely over; for ſhe found that more intereſt was neceſſary for the purpoſe than ſhe could command: and that ſhe had, for that reaſon, laid aſide her comedy.

She gave this account, in a manner which plainly indicated that ſhe believed herſelf ſpeaking to a perſon who took but little concern in any thing that regarded her; and, after juſt replying to my enquiries, ſhe began to ſpeak of Dublin, where ſhe had paſſed ſome months a few years before.

While ſhe was talking, the woman who had opened the door to me came into the room, and with her a favourite dog of Lavinia's, which I had uſed to careſs. The creature ſprung into my arms to wel-

come me, and I received him with my uſual fondneſs; obſerving, that Juno's regard for me had not been leſſened by my abſence. I ſpoke this ſentence with an emphaſis, which penetrated the ſoul of Lavinia, and I ſaw her endeavour to conceal a tear, which trickled down her cheek. No, ſhe replied; poor Juno had more fidelity than was often to be found in human nature; ſhe had even continued her attachment to her miſtreſs, when every thing elſe had forſaken her. But, ſaid ſhe, (recollecting herſelf, and betraying, by a bluſh, that ſhe thought ſhe had carried her reply too far) her perſevering fondneſs is to be accounted for; for now that I live entirely alone, I ſhew her more attention than I had uſed to do formerly. The heart wants ſomething to be kind to; and it conſoles us for the loſs of ſociety, to ſee

even

even an animal derive happineſs from the endearments we beſtow upon it.

At that moment Juno ſprung out of my arms, and flew to thoſe of her miſtreſs, who received her very fondly; and I flattered myſelf the creature's reception was not the leſs favourable, from the remembrance ſhe ſhowed of my former kindneſs to her, and her joy at ſeeing me return. Indeed there were many little circumſtances occurred in conſequence of Juno's coming into the room, which diſcovered Lavinia's undiminiſhed tenderneſs for me, and muſt have eradicated every idea of jealouſy from a mind leſs deeply infected than mine was by that deſtructive paſſion. But though I drew numberleſs omens of a flattering nature, both from her ſituation and her whole behaviour, I could not de-

termine to relieve the inquietudes I was now convinced ſhe felt on my account, until I had made ſome inquiry, whether the gentleman my ſuſpicions fell upon as being my rival, ſtill continued to viſit her; and on what footing their acquaintance was ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt. Unhappily for me, there was not at that time any perſon in town who could give me the information I wiſhed for, as the family, at whoſe houſe I left Lavinia, when I ſet out for Ireland, were in the country, and I was not on a footing of intimacy with any of her other friends.

While I continued in this ſtate of anxiety, I was adviſed to go down to the borough of ———, in order to canvaſs my friends there againſt the approaching election; and I undertook the journey with greater

greater cheerfulneſs, as I was to paſs by the gentleman's houſe in my way, with whoſe family Lavinia reſided before ſhe removed into her preſent retirement, and who would, of courſe, give me the intelligence I ſo much wiſhed to gain, about the acquaintance between her and the proprietor of —— Theatre, and any other information I might deſire to obtain reſpecting her. I accordingly ſet out for ——, the fifth day after my arrival in London, and determined, before I returned, to go on to Devonſhire, and take a laſt farewell of my paternal manſion, which was now advertiſed for ſale in the enſuing month.

CHAP. XX.

I Arrived at the houſe of Lavinia's friend in the afternoon, and was received by both the gentleman and lady, and their three very good natured daughters, with as hearty a welcome as friendſhip and hoſpitality could offer. Lavinia ſoon became the ſubject of our converſation; and the lady herſelf, who was what is generally called a very prudent woman, ſaid ſhe had known Lavinia intimately from her childiſh days, and had never been able to diſcover any fault but one in her, and that was her being too regardleſs of her own intereſt. She then informed me of an offer of marriage which

which ſhe had refuſed a few years before, for no one reaſon in the world, but becauſe the gentleman drank a little too freely. To be ſure, ſaid ſhe, it would have been better if he had not done ſo, but women muſt not expect to find a man all perfection; and a Baronet with 3000l. a year is not to be met with every day: beſides, ſhe knew very well ſhe ſhould offend all her family by rejecting Sir Thomas.

And is that the reaſon, I replied, that her relations have neglected her ſo cruelly in her diſtreſſes?

Indeed it is, returned the lady; for I believe ſhe never, even in thought, was guilty of any thing elſe which could poſſibly diſoblige them. But this is not the only inſtance of her refuſing an advantage-

ous match. She has within theſe three weeks given a final denial to a friend of ours, who has a good thouſand a year, and would, I can anſwer for it, have made an excellent huſband. He ſaw her at our houſe before you went to Ireland, and was ſo charmed with her manners, as well as her perſon, that he made her an offer of his hand before ſhe went to her lodgings; and though ſhe refuſed him without heſitation, he continued ſo attached to her, that he wrote to her about a month ago upon the ſame ſubject; but ſhe again declined his propoſal, and requeſted he would deſiſt from further ſolicitations, as ſhe was determined never to marry. With what delight did I attend to theſe unequivocal proofs of Lavinia's noble diſintereſtedneſs. They endeared her to my ſoul; I languiſhed to be with her, and to breathe the adoration

ration of a doating lover on her boſom. But while my heart was thus melting with tenderneſs, that ever buſy fiend, Suſpicion, made one final effort to diſturb my affection. The lady had not once mentioned the proprietor of ——— theatre, who had been for ſome time paſt the object of my jealouſy; and it occurred to me, that the omiſſion might be intentional: for that reaſon, I purpoſely introduced the ſubject of her dramatic undertaking, and lamented that her comedy was not likely to be brought upon the ſtage.

The lady caught up the ſubject immediately. Aye, ſaid ſhe, there is another inſtance of Lavinia's indiſcretion, in ſacrificing her intereſt to a falſe notion of delicacy. Her comedy was almoſt finiſhed, and would certainly have been brought on very

very early in the ſeaſon, if ſhe had not been ſo over ſcrupulous; but becauſe Mr. ——, the proprietor, ſhewed her more attention than ſhe thought a mere friend would have done, ſhe pleaded ſome idle excuſe or another for throwing her play aſide, and declining the viſits he frequently made her. To be ſure one would think ſhe was infatuated; for every body knows his property is very conſiderable: and it was the opinion of the world that he would certainly marry her as ſoon as her comedy was brought upon the ſtage; for he could ſpeak of nothing but her, let him be in what company he would; and in ſuch a ſtile of admiration and reſpect, that it was impoſſible to avoid ſeeing how tenderly he was attached to her.

This

This full explanation coming from a woman whom I knew incapable of diſſembling with me, at once annihilated every remaining doubt; and Lavinia's virtues ſhone out upon my imagination in all their native luſtre.

I was now ſo impatient to return to her, that it was with great difficulty I could reſiſt my deſire of going back immediately to London, inſtead of proſecuting my journey to the borough I was going to canvaſs; but the impropriety of diſappointing thoſe friends I had engaged to meet me there upon my electioneering ſcheme, prevented my indulging the wiſh of my ſoul, and I ſet out reluctantly the next morning, on my way to the place I have juſt mentioned.

Oh! why did not my guardian angel whiſper to me the conſequences which would

would attend that fatal meaſure, and bid me neglect every thing for the ſake of my Lavinia? Why did I not write, to tell her that ſuſpicion was at laſt eradicated from my ſoul, and that I now was her's for ever? But, fool that I was, I ſighed to enjoy the happineſs of telling her, in perſon, how entirely I now adored her, and of receiving, from her lips, the pardon I longed ſo fervently to obtain.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

I Met with all the ſucceſs in my canvaſs at —— that I could poſſibly wiſh for; and had ordered my horſes out for the purpoſe of returning to London, inſtead of going on to Devonſhire; when one of the waitors of the inn I had ſlept at, brought me a letter which was that moment found in one of the parlours, and had, he ſaid, probably been thrown in at the window, as no perſon in the houſe could account for its being there. It was directed for me, of courſe I opened it, and to my infinite ſurprize found its contents a follows:

"SIR,

"SIR,

"My conſcience will not let me reſt until I have informed you of the villanous device which has been uſed to invalidate your claim to the 40,000l. which your father had lent upon mortgage to Mr.—— of L—ſhire. The deed produced, to ſet aſide your's by its prior date, was originally for no more than four thouſand five hundred pounds, but the *four* has been changed into forty, on purpoſe to defraud you; and upon examining the parchment accurately, I think you may diſcover that there have been ſome letters eraſed, and others inſerted, as the colour of the ink is not exactly alike. I was privy to the whole tranſaction; and if you cannot obtain juſtice without my appearance, I will ſtand forth and give evidence of the fraud; but unleſs

unleſs I am abſolutely neceſſary, I wiſh not to be ſeen in the buſineſs; as my own bread and that of my children depends on the favour of Mr. ——, and his coadjutor in this wicked conſpiracy. If you proſecute this affair with vigour, you may bring it to trial next aſſizes, and depend upon the word of a ſincere penitent, I will be in court on the day of trial, to come forward as a witneſs for you, if the eraſement does not appear ſufficient evidence of the forgery, to gain a verdict in your favour; till then I ſhall remain your unknown friend,

——."

My feelings at reading this letter are not to be deſcribed, for it had no appearance of being written by a mere incendiary; and indeed it had always appeared aſtoniſhing

ing to me, that my father, who was a man of high eminence in the law, ſhould lend ſo large a ſum as forty thouſand pounds without taking ſuch precautions as might effectually prevent any danger of loſing it. My agent, whom I have mentioned as being an attorney of conſiderable note, happened fortunately to be one of thoſe who met me at ——, for the purpoſe of aſſiſting in my canvaſs: I ſhewed the letter to him; and as the deed which was mentioned in it, was in the hands of an attorney at L——, the chief town of the county where the mortgaged eſtate lay, we both ſet out directly for the place, in order to demand a ſight of it; and take whatever ſteps were neceſſary to bring forward the affair at the next aſſizes for the county.

Before our departure for L—— we left an advertiſement to be printed in hand-bills, and

and diſperſed through all the neighbouring towns and villages, requeſting the perſon who threw in the letter, to favour me with his addreſs, which he might rely upon having kept an inviolable ſecret: and offering a reward of one hundred pounds to the perſon who ſhould do ſo: but no anſwer was produced by my advertiſment; nor ſhould I ever have known who wrote the letter, if a circumſtance had not occured very accidentally, which aſſured me it was the landlord of the inn I was at, that had done me this eminent ſervice.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

AS ſoon as we arrived at L——, my agent called upon the perſon in whoſe hand the altered deed remained, and requeſted he would favour me with a ſight of it; but he ſhuffled exceedingly in his anſwer, and even pretended it was not then in his poſſeſſion. The agent however was not to be baffled by his pretences, but told him poſitively, that if he did not produce it when he ſhould call with me in about an hour's time, he would commence a legal proceſs againſt him immediately, and compel him to compliance. He then promiſed it ſhould be forthcoming, and we went to his houſe at the hour appointed.

ed. The deed was then produced to my great ſatisfaction, (for I much expected to find he had abſconded with it,) and I never ſaw terror ſo ſtrongly depicted in any countenance as it was in his when he obſerved me unfold the parchment, and turn directly to the ſpot where the eraſement and inſertions had been made: indeed, upon examination, they were ſo conſpicuous, that we wondered they had not been detected before; but where we do not ſuſpect any fraud, we often paſs over very evident marks of it. I now charged him poſitively with the forgery, which he did not make any reply to; but ſtretching over the deed, as if to examine the place I adverted to, he twitched the parchment ſuddenly out of my hand, and running precipitately into an adjoining room, thruſt it into the middle of a large fire; and

and thus put an end to a tranſaction, which if it had not been diſcovered juſt in the criſis, would have defrauded me of 35,500l. for the eſtate which this pretended mortgage was upon, had been advertiſed to be ſold for ſome time paſt, and no private purchaſer treating about it, the owner at length determined to have it put up to auction, for the purpoſe, as he pretended, of paying off this mortgage; but as the whole affair was concerted jointly by the mortgager and mortgagee, with a view to cheat me of my money, there is no doubt but when the eſtate was diſpoſed of, they would have ſhared the profits of it between them, and removed themſelves beyond the reach of juſtice; ſo that my going down to canvaſs juſt at that juncture, appeared to be one of the moſt fortunate events that could have happened, and

moſt likely to enſure me a life of uninterrupted happineſs with Lavinia.

But alas! how fallible is human judgment in the expectations it forms of reſulting conſequences, and how little can we depend upon the faireſt proſpect of felicity?

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS unexpected recovery of my 40,000l. which I had entirely given up all idea of ever receiving, prevented, of courſe, the ſale of my eſtate; and I once more indulged my imagination in anticipating the felicity I ſhould enjoy with Lavinia at that delightful manſion, where nothing was wanted but ſuch a companion to form a ſecond paradiſe. While I was meditating on thoſe ſcenes of approaching felicity, which roſe ſo ſmiling to my view, it occured to me, that as I intended to bring Lavinia down to this my native home, as ſoon as we were married, I ought to make ſome arrangements in the houſe againſt

gainſt the arrival of its miſtreſs; and I determined to go down thither for that purpoſe, (as I was only ſeventy miles diſtant) before I returned to London. I therefore left my agent at L——, to conclude the buſineſs of the mortgage, and ſet out immediately for Devonſhire. It was now the beginning of May, and the weather remarkably fine for the ſeaſon: and in ſuch a county as Devonſhire, where the ſeverity of winter is ſeldom ſo rigorous as to lock up the powers of vegetation, with that intenſeneſs it does in other parts of England, the ſpring blooms forth in all its beauty, at a very early period: ſo that when I arrived near my houſe, I found the myrtles and roſe-trees which embo-ſomed it, already throwing forth their bloſ-ſoms; the woods in full leaf, and the meadows covered with the ſofteſt verdure,

and enamelled with a beautiful variety of flowers. Oh reader! if you have a ſoul ſuſceptible of gratitude, imagine what were my ſenſations while I contemplated this delightful ſcene, reſtored to me, when I believed it loſt for ever, by the indulgent bounty of Providence. I lifted my eyes and hands toward Heaven, while my heart poured forth its thankfulneſs to that Almighty Power who had heard and granted my petition; for I aſked but the poſſeſſion of this domain, and the ſociety of Lavinia, as the certain means of happineſs.

I aroſe the next morning as ſoon as it was day, to take a view of the apartment I intended for Lavinia;—it was in the South wing of the houſe, which opened into a beautiful pleaſure-ground, terminated by a ſhrubbery, and commanded one

one of the moſt delightful views in Devonſhire. This wing contained a ſuit of three rooms, each of them opening into a Gothic Portico, on a level with the pleaſure-ground; and I intended converting them into a dreſſing-room, a muſic-room, and a library, for her uſe.

They ſeemed, indeed, as if they had been deſigned by the Architect for that purpoſe; for nothing could be more convenient, or more completely ſuited to the uſes I was going to turn them to. While I was walking from room to room, and meditating, with rapture, on the happy days I ſhould paſs there with my Lavinia, the Upholſterer I had ſent a ſervant over-night to bring from Exeter, came in, and I gave him directions about the furniture, which he engaged to provide in

the courſe of ten days. My next buſineſs was to ſearch my own library, which was one of the compleateſt in England, and ſelect ſuch books as I thought would ſuit the taſte of Lavinia; and as I was three days in making the ſelection, the people who were employed to prepare the room for their reception, had finiſhed their work as ſoon as I had mine, and I devoted a fourth day to arranging them upon the ſhelves. After this buſineſs was accompliſhed, I had only one more taſk to perform; it was the purchaſing at a nurſery-ground not far from me, all the curious greenhouſe-plants which were then coming into bloſſom; and as I ſet out early in the morning to chuſe them, they were ſent home time enough for me to place them myſelf, after dinner, in the portico adjoining the apartment, and in thoſe parts

parts of the pleaſure-ground which required additional ornament. I had now compleated every thing to my wiſh, and on the ſeventh day after my arrival, I ſet out from this enchanting ſpot, in a full perſuaſion that I ſhould ſoon return to it the happieſt of human beings.

CHAP. XXIV.

AS the borough I had lately been canvaſſing was in my way to London, I determined to make it my reſting place; for I much wiſhed to know, whether the hand-bills I ordered to be diſperſed round the neighbourhood, had induced the perſon who had ſent me the anonymous letter there, to communicate his addreſs, as I requeſted. But, on my arrival, I found that my offer of the hundred pounds had not had any influence; and that my friend ſtill concealed himſelf from my knowledge. The next morning I got up very early, in hopes of reaching London, if poſſible, that night;

night; and recollecting, while I was at breakfaſt, that I had forgot to order ſomething, which I then might write about, to the upholſterer at Exeter, I called for paper and ink, which the landlord himſelf brought me, and ſtood waiting while I wrote the letter. When I was about to ſeal it, I found that I had left my watch in the bed-chamber, and deſired the landlorp to lend me a ſeal. He took his watch out for the purpoſe; and as it is common to look at the impreſſion after you have ſealed a letter, I did it from habit, and, to my inexpreſſible ſurprize, recognized the ſame head (which was rather a remarkable one) that I had taken ſo much notice of on the ſeal of the anonymous letter. I looked at it very attentively for a moment, then turning to the landlord, I ſaid, with a ſmile,

that I believed I now knew to whom I was indebted for the recovery of my fortune.

The poor man was ſo affected, upon finding I had diſcovered him to be the perſon, that I thought he would have fallen to the ground; but, upon my ſpeaking kindly to him, and aſſuring him I would never betray the ſecret, he recovered his confidence; and, after imploring my pardon for the part he had taken in this iniquitous affair, he gave me the following relation of the conſpiracy:—"I was (ſaid he) at that time, ſervant to Mr. ——, who owned the eſtate which your mortgage was upon; and as ſoon as the rumour was ſpread, of your having loſt ſo large a ſum at Bruſſels, he concluded you would call in your money, and was made very uneaſy by the expectation of it.

While

While his mind was under this uneaſineſs, old Mr. ——, the attorney, who had a mortgage of four thouſand five hundred pounds upon the eſtate, before your father lent the forty thouſand, came to dine with my maſter, as he uſually did every half year when he received his intereſt money; and, while I was waiting at dinner, they talked over the probability of your demanding your mortgage. After ſome converſation, which ſufficiently informed me, that the attorney's mortgage was only four thouſand five hundred pounds, he pauſed a little, and then told my maſter, that there was a method to be purſued, which might ſerve him effectually. My maſter aſked him what it was? for he would do any thing, he ſaid, to retard the immediate payment of that plaguy mortgage. But the attorney nodded his head

inſtead of anſwering, and there was no more ſaid on the ſubject while I remained in the room.

I had occaſion to go into the parlour again about an hour afterwards, with a letter to my maſter, and I found them both ſitting, ſide by ſide, with a large parchment open, on the table before them. They ſeemed confuſed at ſeeing me, and turned the parchment a little over, to prevent my obſerving what it was; and as I went out of the door, I overheard my maſter ſay, "I thought I had bolted it." All this myſtery made me ſuſpect there was ſomething wrong going forward; for old ——, the attorney, was reckoned a great rogue—ſo I put my ear cloſe to the key-hole, and there I heard my maſter ſay, in a kind of whiſper, "I wiſh you would do

do it, for my hand is grown ſo unſteady, I am ſure I ſhall make a blot." "Nay, (ſaid the attorney,) that is impoſſible; for, ever ſince I had the paralytic ſtroke at Chriſtmas, my hand ſhakes ſo, I can hardly write my name."

I was juſt then called away, and heard nothing more of the buſineſs for two days. But that night, when I was helping my maſter to undreſs, he ſaid to me, "Edward, you have been a very faithful ſervant to me, and I begin to think I ought to put you in ſome ſituation which might enable you to bring up your family. I think you have ſeven children." I told him I had, and that I found it very difficult to provide for them out of my wife's little earnings, and my own wages.—"Well," ſaid he, "we'll ſee what can be done.

done. Don't you think you could manage an inn? I know you have been well brought up, and, I think, might do exceedingly well in one." I told him I believed I might; but that I had no money, nor any friend to advance me the ſum that would be neceſſary on ſuch an occaſion. "Never mind that," ſaid my maſter, "I will ſtand your friend, if you can find a ſituation to your wiſhes." He then bid me good night, and I left his chamber, not ſo highly impreſſed by his generoſity as I ſhould have been, if I had known nothing of the circumſtances I have juſt mentioned.

The next day but one, the attorney came to dine with my maſter again; and, while I was waiting at table, my maſter told him of what he had ſaid to me about ſetting up an

an inn. "Cod's ſo!" ſaid old ———, "I am glad you have mentioned it, for I have one juſt now to let, and he ſhall have it before any other perſon, for I have a great regard for Edward." The affair went no farther at that time; but, in the evening, they called me in, and my maſter told me, that there was a little trifle of buſineſs to be done, which he thought I could do, and ſave the trouble of ſending for an attorney; beſides, he ſaid, it muſt be kept a ſecret, and he knew he could truſt me.

The old rogue of an attorney then began to ſpeak to me, and ſaid there was no hurt whatever in the thing they wanted me to do; it was only a mere matter of form, which had been forgotten in a deed, and muſt be inſerted now, to prevent danger; but that I muſt promiſe never to divulge the affair

affair to any perſon whatſoever. Nay, he ſaid, I had better give them my oath on the occaſion, and then even my wife would not worm it out of me. Aye, that was the beſt way, my maſter ſaid; and then he would advance me the five hundred pounds, which was neceſſary to eſtabliſh me in the inn they had been talking about. They then produced the deed of mortgage, which I altered according to their inſtruction, and afterwards took the oath of ſecrecy. And the next morning, when the attorney came again, I received five hundred pounds, in bank notes, from my maſter, and an agreement from the other, that I ſhould live, rent free, in this inn I now occupy, during my life. They, however, took another ſecurity for my ſecrecy beſides my oath; for I was obliged to give my note of hand to my maſter for the five hundred pounds,

which

which he was not to demand, unleſs I betrayed the confidence placed in me; and alſo to ſign articles to the attorney, engaging to pay all the arrears of rent, and forfeit, over and above, the ſum of one hundred pounds, if ever I mentioned the affair of the deed to any perſon.

Thus, Sir, continued the poor landlord, you ſee how much I hazarded, by putting you in the way of doing yourſelf juſtice; but if my life, as well as my property, had been concerned, I ſhould have done juſt as I did; for, from the moment I ſaw you enter my houſe, and heard who you were, my conſcience would not let me have one quiet moment, until I had wrote you the anonymous letter.

The very important ſervice this poor fellow had done me, by pointing out the fraud which was ſo very near deſtroying me; and the ſincere penitence he ſeemed to feel, for having been acceſſary to it, made me determine to reward his returning honeſty in a liberal manner. I therefore deſired an attorney might be immediately ſent for—and had a bond, for a thouſand pounds, payable in ſix months, drawn up, which I preſented him with, and received in return, all thoſe acknowledgments which a grateful mind, impreſſed with a ſenſe of unexpected favours, may be naturally ſuppoſed to dictate.

So large a part of the morning had been paſſed in the recital which the innkeeper gave me, and in drawing up the bond, that there was not a poſſibility of my reaching

London

London before the next day. I ſet forward, however, in hopes of getting there the following morning; for every delay I met with, increaſed my impatience to ſee Lavinia, whoſe ſociety was now the only thing that was wanting to complete my happineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

I Arrived in London about noon the next day, and took a hackney-coach directly to go to Lavinia's lodging. Upon my knocking at the door, it was opened by a little girl, not more than five years old; and as ſhe heſitated, as if ſhe did not know how to anſwer, when I enquired if Lavinia was at home, I deſired ſhe would call ſome of the people of the houſe to me. She replied that her grand-daddy was gone down to the ſexton's, and her grand-mamma was ſitting by the lady up ſtairs. I concluded it muſt be Lavinia ſhe meant, ſo went up ſtairs directly. When I gained the landing place, I found the

the door of the room I had lately ſeen her in at work, ſet wide open, and perceived a bedſtead let down from a receſs in the wainſcot. As I aſcended the reſt of the ſtaircaſe, I diſcovered———— * Oh Heaven! how was it that I could ſurvive the view of ſuch a ſpectacle? I flew to the bed ſide—I bent over the body, and gazed upon it—I was going to touch the forehead, but I dared not; ſomething awed me—ſomething ſeemed to ſay "Begone! thou art her murderer." My reaſon was at laſt intirely overcome, and I remained for ſome time inſenſible to every thing around me.

When I recovered my faculties, I found myſelf ſitting in an eaſy chair at the

* The manuſcript was ſo exceedingly blotted in this place, that it was hardly legible.

head

head of the bed,—probably the one Lavinia had ſat laſt in. There was an elderly clergyman ſtanding cloſe to me, but he reſpected my ſorrows, and forbore to interrupt them.

After a conſiderable time, he requeſted I would give him leave to conduct me to another room, before he left me; for it was ſunday, and he was obliged to officiate at evening ſervice. I could make no reply but by a wave of my hand, for I had loſt all power of utterance. He remained ſilent a little longer, and then renewing his entreaties, he took me by the arm, and endeavoured to raiſe me gently from my ſeat: I roſe up to relieve myſelf from his importunities, but upon gaining a fuller view of the beauteous corſe ſtretched out before me, I fell

fell back again into the chair, and exclaimed "I wont be torn from her." "It is not tearing you from her," replied the good old man, with the tears trickling down his face; "ſhe is gone from hence into a ſtate of bleſſedneſs, and that ought to conſole us: reflect upon it, my dear ſir, and endeavour to moderate your ſorrow. He then turned to the woman of the houſe, who was ſitting on the other ſide of the bed, and deſired ſhe would not leave me, on any account, untill he returned, which ſhould be as ſoon as the church ſervice was over."

It gratified me to be freed from the reſtraint which his preſence had laid me under. I roſe up haſtily as ſoon as he had got down ſtairs—walked wildly about the room—bent again over the body, and

and again endeavoured to touch its forehead with my lips, but I was ſtill reſtrained by a dread which I could not account for.

While I ſtood gazing on thoſe lifeleſs features I had ſo often contemplated with rapture, and which ſtill wore their wonted ſmile of angelic ſweetneſs, I heard a kind of ſigh which made me ſtart; the woman obſerving me, ſaid, it was only poor Juno, who could not be got from under the bed, or hardly even tempted to take any kind of food ſince her miſtreſs fell ill. The bare naming of Juno, called inſtantaneouſly to my recollection all the incidents which occurred at my former viſit to this apartment. I heard, in imagination, every tone of Lavinia's voice, when ſhe ſaid "poor Juno had more

more fidelity than was often to be found in human nature; for ſhe had even continued her attachment to her miſtreſs when every thing elſe had forſaken her." The remembrance of this cenſure, ſo juſtly paſſed upon my conduct, and the idea that Lavinia died in a belief that I continued to deſerve it, worked up my ſoul to ſuch a pitch of anguiſh, that I believe I ſhould have been guilty of ſome act of deſperation if the clergyman had not at that moment re-entered the room.

The benevolent old man perceived, and was exceedingly alarmed at the diſordered ſtate he found me in; and aſked the woman, in a low voice, if ſhe had ſaid any thing about Lavinia to occaſion it? ſhe replied no; but I had heard poor Juno groan under the bed, and that had

thrown me into ſuch uneaſineſs. Her naming Juno, again drew my attention to the affectionate annimal, and I requeſted ſhe would bring her out to me; ſhe ſaid ſhe would call her little granddaughter, for Juno would not ſuffer any one elſe to lay a hand on her ſince her miſtreſs died: The child came in, and took her up in her arms very affectionately; for though a middle ſized ſpaniel, ſhe was ſo reduced by faſting, that an infant might have lifted her. I was going to take her to my boſom, but—(oh! what agony of ſoul did I feel at that moment!) inſtead of careſſing me, as ſhe was wont to do, ſhe ſnarled and endeavoured to bite me, when I touched her, as if ſhe wiſhed to revenge the loſs of her beloved miſtreſs upon the wretch who had cruſhed her to the grave by his neglect.

When

When the firſt diſtraction which this incident occaſioned, loſt its frantic violence, I deſired the little girl would take Juno down ſtairs, and ſtay there with her conſtantly; and promiſed her grandmother that if the dog could be preſerved, I would give the child twenty guineas immediately, and ſettle an annuity of twenty more upon Juno, if ſhe would promiſe to take care of her, and let the little girl be her nurſe.

The child's eyes overflowed with joy at hearing this promiſe, and ſhe kiſſed Juno a thouſand times, as ſhe carried her down the ſtair-caſe, which ſhe did with difficulty, for the poor annimal howled and ſtruggled very much to return to her former ſtation: the grandmother was no leſs delighted than the child with this

mark of liberality;—ſhe thanked me over and over again, and aſſured me that Nancy would be the happieſt creature in the world to wait on Juno, for ſhe loved her as ſhe did her life, and had done nothing but cry ever ſince Lavinia's deceaſe, for fear the dog ſhould be taken from her.

The diſpoſing of poor Juno, by employing my thoughts for a few minutes, gave a temporary reſpite to the wild exceſs of my grief; and the good clergyman ſeized that opportunity of talking to me, not in the language of common conſolers, but by ſoothing the ſorrow it was evident he ſhared, and trying to lead my thoughts inſenſibly from the dear object that lay ſtretched before my eyes.

He entreated me, with the tenderneſs of a friend, to paſs the night at his houſe, and promiſed that not even his wife ſhould appear to interrupt our woe. I was at laſt overcome by his perſuaſion, and went with him (as it was now almoſt dark,) to the Parſonage, which was but a very little way off: it was, however, with great difficulty I could be induced to remain there, for my ſoul languiſhed to be again with Lavinia, as if ſhe were yet alive, and might be made ſenſible of the reaſons which prevented my writing to her, in the courſe of the laſt fortnight; for it was juſt ſo long ſince I ſaw her in ſeeming health, and without any circumſtance to indicate a ſpeedy diſſolution.

CHAP. XXVI.

WHEN we got to the Parſonage, the amiable old man did not take me into the parlour, but to a ſmall neat ſtudy, where we were ſecure from interruption; and after ſitting in ſilence for about half an hour, he began, in the moſt delicate manner, to introduce the ſubject of Lavinia's illneſs; ſuppoſing, as indeed was the caſe, that I wiſhed to be informed of all the circumſtances, though I had not the courage to make any enquiry.

He firſt informed me, that he had not the happineſs of knowing her, until ſhe came into

into this neighbourhood; but that, after ſeeing her ſeveral times at church, and obſerving an air of melancholy about her, which extremely intereſted him, he deſired his wife would make her a viſit, and endeavour to cultivate her acquaintance; for he knew ſhe muſt be a woman of character, by her lodging where ſhe did; as Mrs. ———, who kept the houſe, was very cautious whom ſhe received into it, notwithſtanding her being ſo reduced, by a variety of misfortunes, as to have little more to ſubſiſt on beſides what ſhe made of her apartment, which, he believed, was let to Lavinia, for ſeven ſhillings a week. His wife, he ſaid, was charmed with her converſation; and, for his own part, he found ſuch delight in her ſociety, that it almoſt made up to him the loſs of a beloved and only daughter, who died about two years ago.

Here the good man's tears entirely choaked his utterance; for his grief was mellowed by time, and could unbend its poignancy by weeping. After ſome minutes, he reſumed the ſubject of Lavinia, and told me ſhe was taken ill the very day after I had viſited her: That ſhe was at firſt attacked by frequent faintings, which terminated in a ſlow fever, and a loathing of all kind of ſuſtenance; and that, though nobody about her imagined the diſorder dangerous until within the laſt four days, ſhe had herſelf a preſentiment of her approaching end; and looked forward to the awful moment of diſſolution, with that calm and ſteady fortitude, which the recollection of a well ſpent life, and a firm confidence in the mercy of heaven, can alone enable us to maintain.

After

After ſome farther converſation, of the ſame pious tendency, he intreated me to take a little refreſhment; and ſome wine and biſcuits were brought in, but it was with difficulty I could ſwallow either. He then pauſed a little; and, after a few minutes, reſumed the ſubject, by ſaying, that he had in his pocket, ſome ſtanzas written by Lavinia, he believed, from the date, on the very day I was with her; and, when I was ſufficiently compoſed to read them, he would give them to me. I ſtretched forth my hand impatiently, to receive the manuſcript, which he had already taken out of a pocket-book; for the ſight of her well-known characters threw me into ſuch agitation, that I was ready to ſnatch the paper from his hand. It contained the following verſes, which, though not ſo elegantly finiſhed as moſt of her other poe-

try, breathe a ſpirit of piety and reſigna-tion, which mark the mind of an angel.

Be huſh'd each ſigh, whoſe murm'ring moan
Of endleſs woe complains;
Be mine, in patient hope alone,
To bear what Heav'n ordains.

In mercy, each afflicting dart,
Is ſent ſome fault to chide;
To probe ſome weakneſs in my heart,
Self-love wou'd fondly hide:

Or wean me from this vale of care,
Where ling'ring ſtill I cling;
And bid my earth-chain'd thoughts prepare,
T'ward Heav'n to raiſe their wing.

Looſe thou thine arrows, Lord; nor heed
My tears, my pray'rs combin'd;
Save when for grace they humbly plead,
To meet thy will reſign'd.

My mind was more forcibly ſtruck with the moral leſſon inculcated by this little poem, particularly the laſt ſtanza, than it would have been though an angel had deſcended from on high to teach me the duty of reſignation. My countenance, as well as my thoughts, became more ſerene; and the good old man, perceiving the alteration which theſe ſublime effuſions of Lavinia's piety had produced, adapted his diſcourſe to the preſent temper of my mind; and reaſoned ſo feelingly, and at the ſame ime ſo eloquently, upon the uncertain tenor of human happineſs—the anxiety inſeparable from the poſſeſſion of every ſublunary bleſſing, whoſe loſs the trembling heart anticipates, even in the heighth of enjoyment; and deduced ſuch powerful aſſurances of a future exiſtance from this imperfection in our preſent ſtate, that he

reconciled me, in ſome meaſure, to the loſs I had ſuſtained, by pointing my views to that happy immortality, where faith is changed into certainty, and hope is loſt in the full fruition of our wiſhes.

It was now paſt eleven o'clock—and as my excellent friend believed me ſufficiently compoſed to think of taking ſome reſt, he begged leave to conduct me to my chamber. I followed him up ſtairs, and, after wiſhing me a good night, he prayed to God to comfort me, and ſhut the door.

As ſoon as I was alone, I again read over Lavinia's verſes, and found my mind become more compoſed at every peruſal of them. In ſhort, I no longer lamented the woman torn from my embraces, but I look-

ed

ed up to the Angel throned in glory, and enjoying, in the preſence of her Creator, the bright reward of all her patient ſufferings.

The concluſion of theſe meditations was a fixed reſolve to renounce the world, as ſoon as I had paid the laſt honours to her memory; and by devoting myſelf to a life of ſolitude, and voluntary mortification, to expiate the guilt I had incurred, by my unkind neglect of her.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

THE next morning, the benevolent maſter of the houſe came into my chamber, to enquire how I had reſted; and finding me already up, he deſired to know, whether his wife's company at breakfaſt would be agreeable to me: he begged, if it would not, that I would tell him ſo ingenuouſly, for he would not have me do any thing which was repugnant to my feelings.

I aſſured him, that, ſo far from being averſe to her company, I ſhould find conſolation in ſeeing a lady who had been the friend

friend of Lavinia. Upon this aſſurance he conducted me down ſtairs to the parlour, and introduced me to his wife, who was waiting breakfaſt; and who, ſo far as I could judge, in ſuch an inattentive ſtate of mind, and on an acquaintance of a few days only, appeared deſerving of the huſband ſhe was bleſt with.

When breakfaſt was over, I mentioned Lavinia to her, which immediately drew tears into her eyes. She told me ſhe had been with her almoſt conſtantly during her illneſs, and was preſent at the laſt aweful moment. That ſhe had apparently ſuffered nothing, but from extreme langour, the whole time of her confinement, and went off without a groan, or the leaſt diſtortion of a feature; nay, indeed, ſhe ſaid, there was a ſweet ſmile

mantled

mantled over her countenance, as ſhe cloſed her eyes, which ſeemed as if the joys of Heaven dawned upon her before ſhe had taken leave of mortality.

After ſome farther converſation upon the ſame affecting ſubject, I mentioned the funeral to her, and ſaid ſhe would extremely oblige me, by giving the neceſſary orders, without confining herſelf in point of expence. That I had only one thing to direct, which was the place of interment, as I ſhould wiſh to have the dear remains depoſited by the ſide of her mother, whom I had heard her ſpeak of with the higheſt filial piety and affection, and who was buried at — ——, about ſeventy miles from London: That I would attend the aweful ceremony myſelf, and take care to have a proper monument erected to her memory.

The

The amiable woman bowed aſſent, for her heart was too full to allow of her ſpeaking; and I ſoon after took my leave, in order to make thoſe arrangements I had projected the preceding night, before I ſet out upon my melancholy journey. But, before I departed, the benevolent couple united their intreaties that I would return to dinner: aſſuring me they ſhould be quite alone, and begged I would make their houſe my home, while I continued in that neighbourhood.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

ON my arrival in London, I went directly to my attorney, and made the ſame diſtribution of my fortune, though by a different mode of conveyance, as I ſhould now have done, if I had found my end approaching: and, in this arrangement, I did not forget to make an addition to the twenty pounds a year which Nancy and her grandmother were to have for the maintenance of poor Juno, or to order its continuance after the death of the animal; neither were my amiable friends, the Clergyman and his wife neglected; for, though their income was ſufficient for their own

own moderate expences, it was by no means adequate to their benevolent inclinations; and I believed, by doubling it, I ſhould benefit ſociety more effectually, than by devoting my property to the relief of diſtreſs through any other channel; and I had no relations or friends of my own, or of Lavinia's, who wanted an increaſe of fortune.

After this buſineſs was concluded, I went to an eminent ſtatuary, to give orders about the monument I intended for Lavinia; and as I imagined I might be detained there, I ſent a meſſenger, to excuſe my dining with my friends, as I had engaged to do, but promiſing to wait on them the next day. The artiſt ſhewed me ſeveral deſigns, but none of them correſponded with my idea of that ſimplicity

which

which ſhould prevail in thoſe memorials of the dead. I therefore ſketched out one myſelf, which I ordered to be executed in the fineſt alabaſter, and finiſhed in the higheſt ſtile of workmanſhip. It was to be Lavinia's effigy, done from a full length portrait, by ———, leaning on an anchor, and looking up to the emblem of immortality, without regarding ſeveral enraged adders, ſcorpions, and harpies, which ſurrounded her feet. The following epitaph, which I wrote that night, was to be inſcribed in a medallion on the pedeſtal, with her name, &c. under it.

EPITAPH.

If ev'ry ſweet endowment, ev'ry grace,
Which form an angel mind, an angel face,
Untimely bow'd, in life's meridian bloom,
By ling'ring woe, to the oblivious tomb,
Can melt the ſoul, and claim a pitying tear,
Oh! reader, pauſe—and pour that tribute here.

I had

I had now but one mournful duty to perform, before I took my laſt farewel of the world. It was attending the remains of Lavinia to the place of interment; and I reſolved to go alone; I mean without a friend, or any perſon to interrupt my meditations. The good clergyman would have accompanied me; but I diſſuaded him from the deſign, as he had ſymptoms of a nervous diſorder flying about him, which were likely to be increaſed by ſo melancholy a journey. He yielded to my remonſtrances very reluctantly, from an apprehenſion that ſo affecting a ſcene would overcome my fortitude, and bring on a relapſe of my firſt diſtraction: but I aſſured him he had nothing to fear, for it was the ſettled calm of reſignation, which no ſpectacle could diſturb, that I now experienced, and that I could even

ſee

ſee the univerſe fall into confuſion round me, without being diſquieted by the event. But, alas! I impoſed upon myſelf by this confidence; for I had ſtill all the weakneſs of human nature about me; and as ſoon as my mind was diſengaged from that buſtle of buſineſs, which, for a while, ſuſpended the poignancy of ſorrow, I fell again into deſpair; and, even to the preſent moment, I am, at intervals, the prey of that tumultuous paſſion.

The pious old man was deceived, as well as myſelf, by the aſſurances I gave him of my being perfectly reſigned; and congratulated me upon my patient acquieſcence in the will of Heaven. He warned me, however, not to carry my indifference reſpecting human events to an improper exceſs, or ſuffer apathy to ſteal into my

 boſom,

boſom, leſt it ſhould engender miſanthropic propenſities. We were all links in one great chain of being, he ſaid, and there were duties aſſigned to every individual, which he could not abandon, without defeating the end of his creation, and conſequently offending that Almighty Power who had called him into exiſtence. That it was the wiſh of every rational creature to avoid incurring the diſpleaſure of the Deity; that the abject mind endeavoured not to provoke his indignation, from motives of fear, while the noble one was influenced by the generous principle of gratitude, and a conſciouſneſs of what it owed to the author of its being, to render him every duty in its power: That, to accompliſh this deſired end, it was neceſſary to guard againſt that unſocial gloomineſs which has deprived community of many a

uſeful

ſee the univerſe fall into confuſion round me, without being diſquieted by the event. But, alas! I impoſed upon myſelf by this confidence; for I had ſtill all the weakneſs of human nature about me; and as ſoon as my mind was diſengaged from that buſtle of buſineſs, which, for a while, ſuſpended the poignancy of ſorrow, I fell again into deſpair; and, even to the preſent moment, I am, at intervals, the prey of that tumultuous paſſion.

The pious old man was deceived, as well as myſelf, by the aſſurances I gave him of my being perfectly reſigned; and congratulated me upon my patient acquieſcence in the will of Heaven. He warned me, however, not to carry my indifference reſpecting human events to an improper exceſs, or ſuffer apathy to ſteal into my

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uſeful member, and which is too apt to grow upon the mind, after the loſs of any object where our affections were all concentered, and our happineſs built upon its poſſeſſion. For, continued he, while we are languiſhing with the wounds our ſenſibility has received from ſuch misfortunes, we are apt to ſuppoſe ourſelves uſeleſs to the world; becauſe the world has no longer any attractions for us; but we are incapable of penetrating the ſcheme by which the Almighty governs the univerſe; nor can we tell how far one link may ſuſtain and depend upon another; therefore it is impoſſible for us to judge of our own utility. We ſee, that the loſs of an apparently inſignificant ſpring can interrupt the order of a ſtupenduous piece of mechaniſm; and we know likewiſe that there is nothing unneceſſary, nothing ſuperfluous in nature; but

but that every part, however minute it be, contributes to form one beautiful WHOLE. May we not then reaſonably conclude, that the uncommanded retreat of any human being muſt occaſion a void, and probably produce ſome moral evil, which would not have exiſted, if he had continued in the ſtation allotted him; and conſequently, that he muſt offend by forſaking it.

You muſt not imagine, from my expreſſing myſelf in this manner, ſaid the good old man, that I am one of that impious ſect, who ſuppoſe the univerſe, when once ſet in motion by the Creator, was left to roll on as long as the fabric ſhould laſt, without a ſuperintending Governor, to watch over and regulate its movements. I believe, as every man muſt believe, whoſe pride of appearing ſingular does not throw a cloud be-

fore his reaſon, that the eye of Omnipotence pervades the univerſe in all its parts; while his wiſdom inſtantaneouſly ſupplies whatever is deficient, from the comet that ſweeps through a thouſand ſyſtems, to the inſect which appears ſcarce an atom to our view; and never ſuffers any accident to diſcompoſe the harmonious regularity of its order. But will this excuſe a man who dares create a deficiency in the ſcale of nature; and who, by flying from his ſituation in ſociety, either by devoting himſelf to unprofitable ſolitude, or by the ſtill more criminal act of ſuicide, leaves a chaſm which another muſt be called to fill? No, truſt me, my dear Sir, he will never eſcape with impunity; but be either ſent back into the world, under ſome form which may better ſuit his diſobedient ſpirit, or receive

ceive the puniſhment of his offence in another ſphere of exiſtence.

The juſtneſs of this worthy man's arguments, and his perſuaſive manner of delivering them, exceedingly touched me. They ſtaggered my reſolution of flying from the world, and were very near entirely overturning it. But after he had left me, and I began to reaſon with myſelf upon the ſubject, it occurred to me, that by reſerving ſuch a part of my fortune, as would capacitate me for adminiſtering to the wants of thoſe who might ſtand in need of my aſſiſtance, and affording ſuch other aids as my better information might enable me to give to the ignorant peaſants I ſhould fix amongſt, I might ſtill diſcharge my duty to ſociety, and not incur

the guilt my reverend teacher had ſo anxiouſly warned me to avoid.

After deliberating ſome time, I at laſt determined to reſerve two hundred pounds a year, for the purpoſe juſt mentioned; and I went to my attorney the next morning to make this new arrangement, which I ſhall ever conſider as one of the moſt fortunate events of my life, as it has afforded me the means of doing more good in this ſequeſtered mountain, than my whole fortune could have done in the buſier ſcenes of the world; for it has empowered me to give both food and medicine to the ſick and infirm; ſave their infants from the blighting gripe of poverty; and furniſh the healthy and induſtrious with materials for manufacturing, which their own extreme poverty could never have allowed them to purchaſe;

and

and conſequently they muſt have continued in a ſtate of idleneſs and want. Nor are theſe the only benefits which the peaſants of this country have received from my living amongſt them: I have introduced ſome uſeful arts, which they were before my arrival unacquainted with; and by inſtructing them in the duties of religion and morality, I have ſo humanized and enlightened their minds, that the people, whom I found almoſt as wild and ignorant as ſavages, are now a peaceable and well-informed ſociety, and unite, with grateful hearts, in bleſſing the day when I took my abode in the neighbourhood of their habitations.

CHAP. XXIX.

ON the morning of the day which was appointed for the departure of the funeral, I took an affectionate leave of the excellent couple to whose kindness and hospitality I was so much indebted;—and whose friendship for Lavinia, and concern for her decease, endeared them a thousand times more to my heart than all the tenderness they had shewn me.

My reflections and my feelings during the journey, and at the awful reading of the burial service, were such

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as may be eaſily imagined by thoſe who know the human heart. I ſupported, however, the appearance, if not the reality of fortitude, until the coffin was let down into the vault:—it then forſook me intirely; and the idea of Lavinia now torn for ever from me, ruſhed ſo powerfully on my ſoul, that I loſt all government of my paſſions. I ſprung into the tomb, clung round the coffin, called wildly on Lavinia, implored her to forgive me, and was guilty of a thouſand exceſſes! They took me from thence by force, and conducted me to the Inn, where I believe laudanum was adminiſtered to me! for when I awoke I found I had ſlept a great number of hours. My reaſon now returned; but, alas! I could not immediately recover my

my reſignation: The form of Lavinia was ever preſent to my view!—I talked to her as if ſhe were before me—I accuſed myſelf as her murderer, and begged her forgiveneſs upon my knees.

After ſome days, I became ſufficiently compoſed to write to my reverend friend, and bid him an eternal adieu.

I wrote at the ſame time to my Attorney, and deſired the orders I had given for the diſpoſal of my fortune might be immediately executed, and that information might be given in a certain Newſpaper, when the buſineſs was completed; for I would not truſt him with my addreſs, as I was determined no perſon ſhould ever know, from that moment, where

where I fixed my reſidence; and I had already uſed ſuch precaution, in regard to my income of two hundred pounds a-year, that it was impoſſible I ſhould ever be diſcovered by the means of it.

When theſe letters were finiſhed, I wrote another very long one to a friend whom I ſincerely regarded; and explaining my intention, and my reaſons for abandoning the world, I conjured him, by his friendſhip for me, to take the trouble upon him of ſeeing Lavinia's monument completed: and I had the ſatisfaction to find, when I made a journey from hence, a few years afterwards, to take a laſt farewell of her tomb, that he had fulfilled my requeſt, with a religious exactneſs, and not omitted any thing which could contribute to its beauty.

He

He had, moreover, added a mark of his regard for me, by erecting a marble ablet, close to her monument, inscribed to the memory of Albert.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.—AND LAST.

I Had now concluded every affair which attached my thoughts to the world, and believed myſelf at liberty to proſecute the plan of life I had determined on.

In order to purſue my way, unnoticed, I bought a ſuit of very coarſe cloaths, cut my hair ſhort, and endeavoured to render my appearance as mean as poſſible; and, having nothing to carry with me, but a packet of Lavinia's letters, and the portrait of her, which I have already mentioned, (a copy of which I left with the ſtatuary in London,) I ſet out on foot upon

on my journey. The portrait, which was now my deareſt treaſure, I carried in my hand, having firſt rolled it round very carefully with twine, which I knobbed at proper diſtances, and then varniſhed it over, to give it the appearance of a large ſtaff; and in this manner I travelled many days, without any determined courſe: at laſt I recollected, that Wales was much more likely to afford me the kind of retreat I wiſhed for, than any part of England, and I immediately turned my ſteps towards it. At length I reached this mountain, which I determined to make my reſting place, if I could only find a cave, or ſome uninhabited hut, to ſhelter me from the inclemency of the weather.

After wandering about the mountain for ſome time, I came at laſt to this ſpot, which

which nature ſeemed to have intended for the dwelling of deſpair. I aſcended the ſteps, for they had been made by ſome mer tenant of the cavern, perhaps as wretched as myſelf, and found an abode exactly ſuited to my wiſhes, where I might hope to ſubdue the turbulence of paſſion, by a life of unremitted auſterity, and regain that patient and pious temper of mind which had fled from me at Lavinia's grave. But, alas! it was not eaſily recovered; and even, at this diſtance of time, when a premature old age, and the infirmities incident to ſuch a ſtate, ought to detach my thoughts from every human concern, I cannot forbear, at intervals, comparing my preſent deſolate life, with thoſe ſcenes of ſocial felicity I might now be enjoying, if Providence had not deprived me of Lavinia; and regretting the conſe-

quences of my crime, at the moment my mind ſhould be occupied with the crime itſelf, and even bleſs the event which followed it, as a means, employed to make me ſenſible of my injuſtice and cruelty to Lavinia.

Oh! reader, whoever thou art, that ſhalt, in thoſe pages, trace the viciſſitudes of Albert's fortune, let them impreſs this truth upon thy mind—that the indulgence of the baſer paſſions always brings its puniſhment with it, and that felicity, (ſweet bloſſom of celeſtial growth!) will never bloom in the ungenial ſhade of guiltineſs.

FINIS.